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David K. Bernard was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on November 20, 1956. The son of pioneer United Pentecostal missionaries to the Republic of Korea, he lived in the capital city of Seoul from 1965 to 1974. In 1978, he was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Rice University in Houston, Texas, receiving a B.A. magna cum laude in managerial studies and mathematical sciences. He received his Juris Doctorate with honors from the University of Texas, Austin, Texas in 1981. Also in 1981 he became Dean of Missions, Dean of Students, and instructor at Jackson College of Ministries in Jackson, Mississippi, and in 1982 became Assistant Vice President. With his mother, he has authored *In Search of Holiness*, published in 1981.

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The ONENESS of God

WAP

Jehovah-nissi
El-Shaddai
Adonai
El-olam

The ONENESS of God

by David K. Bernard

Jesus
Lord
Jehovah-jireh
Elohim
El-elyon
Jehovah-rophe
Christ

Series in Pentecostal Theology, Volume 1

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To

Connie

FOREWORD

Understanding is aimed for in these pages. Jesus knew the common Aramaic language. Sometimes He spoke Hebrew, a language only the scholars used at that time. Jesus could converse in Greek, the tongue of the educated man. To whomever Jesus spoke, His aim was to be understood. The greatest teacher of all ages spoke in terms all could understand.

Profundity and simplicity at the same time. What a paradox! The author of this book has accomplished the seemingly impossible. He has transmitted intellectual depth while preserving simplicity. It is a theological miracle. Often the really profound is the most simple, and the simple the most truly profound. The treatment of the oneness of God in this book is designed to be simple; but the truths are profound, scholarly, priceless, and essential to the people of God and a lost world.

A book must meet at least two main criteria to be a best seller. It must be written interestingly and must fill a need. The author accomplishes both.

To know the author and his burden is to understand more of the book. I hope you can meet him and know him as I do. David Bernard is a human example of Christian principles. May these pages become a classic among us and a guide to the searching world as they discover the one, true, and living God. I now commend the author and book to you and all posterity.

T. L. Craft

Jackson, Mississippi

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This book is Volume One of a series in Pentecostal theology. There is a genuine need for thorough, comprehensive study and explanation of the fundamental Bible truths we hold dear, and this series is designed to help meet that need. The present volume endeavors to bring together in one book a complete discussion of the Godhead. It asserts the oneness of God and the absolute deity of Jesus Christ. As of this writing Volume Two, entitled *The New Birth,* is still in the planning and research stage. Volume Three is entitled *In Search of Holiness.* It was written jointly with my mother, Loretta A. Bernard, and was published in 1981.

The goal of this book is not to teach merely the dogma of a denomination, but to teach the Word of God. It is the hope of the author that each person will study the material prayerfully, comparing the views expressed with the Bible. Many scriptural references are given in the book to aid the reader in his search for biblical truth. At the same time, the author recognizes that we must all ask God to anoint our minds and illuminate His Word, if we are to properly understand His revelation to us. The letter alone will kill; but the Spirit gives life (II Corinthians 3:6). The Spirit of God will teach and lead us into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Ultimately God must give the revelation of who Jesus Christ really is (Matthew 16:15-17).

The Oneness of God is based on several years of study and research as well as experience in teaching systematic theology and church history at Jackson College of Ministries in Jackson, Mississippi. I am especially grateful to my mother for reading the manuscript and providing numerous suggestions for improvement, many of which were adopted. I am also thankful to my wife, Connie, for providing assistance in typing and to my father, Reverend Elton D. Bernard, for helping to inspire, publish, and promote this series.

Chapters I-VI present the positive doctrine of Christian monotheism as taught by the Bible, the doctrine commonly known today as Oneness. Chapters VII-IX discuss numerous specific verses of Scripture with a view towards answering objections and rebutting contrary interpretations. Chapter X records the result of much research on the history of Oneness from post-apostolic times to the present. Chapters XI-XII explain the doctrine of trinitarianism, its historical origin and development, and the ways in which it differs from Oneness belief. Finally, Chapter XIII offers a brief summary and conclusion.

In order to document nonbiblical sources of information and yet preserve readability, footnotes have been placed at the end of each chapter. The bibliography lists all sources used as well as a number of other books relating to Oneness. Also, the glossary contains definitions of important theological terms used in the book.

Unless otherwise indicated, definitions of Greek and Hebrew words are from *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.* The following abbreviations for various translations of the Bible are used throughout the book: *KJV* for *King James Version,* *RSV* for *Revised Standard Version, NIV* for *New International Version,* and *TAB* for *The Amplified Bible.* All biblical quotations are from the *KJV* unless otherwise noted.

The purpose of this book is to have some part in establishing the truths of the Word of God in this generation. Its goal is to affirm Christian monotheism—the Bible's teaching of one God. In doing so I intend to magnify Jesus Christ above all. I believe that Jesus is God manifest in flesh, that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him, and that we are complete in Him (Colossians 2:9-10).

David Bernard

1

CHRISTIAN MONOTHEISM

"Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

"God is one" (Galatians 3:20).

There is one God. There is only one God. This doctrine is central to the Bible message, for both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach it plainly and emphatically. Despite the simplicity of this message and the clarity with which the Bible presents it, many who believe in the existence of God have not understood it. Even within Christendom many people, including theologians, have not comprehended this beautiful and essential message. Our purpose is to address this problem, and to affirm and explain the biblical doctrine of the oneness of God.

Monotheism Defined

The belief in only one God is called monotheism, which comes from two Greek words: *monos,* meaning alone, single, one; and *theos,* meaning God. Anyone who does not accept monotheism can be classified as one of the following: an *atheist*—one who denies the existence of God; an *agnostic*—one who asserts that the existence of God is unknown and probably unknowable; a *pantheist*—one who equates God with nature or the forces of the universe; or a *polytheist*—one who believes in more than one God. *Ditheism*, the belief in two gods, is a form of polytheism, and so is *tritheism*, the belief in three gods. Among the major religions of the world, three are monotheistic: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

Within the ranks of those labelling themselves Christian, however, there are several divergent views as to the nature of the Godhead. One view, called trinitarianism, asserts that there are three distinct persons in the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost—but yet one God. (See Chapter XI.)

Within the ranks of trinitarianism, one can discern two extreme tendencies. On the one hand, some trinitarians emphasize the unity of God without having a carefully developed understanding of what is meant by three distinct persons in the Godhead. On the other hand, other trinitarians emphasize the threeness of the trinity to the point that they believe in three self-conscious beings, and their view is essentially tritheistic.

In addition to trinitarianism, there is the doctrine of binitarianism, which does not classify the Holy Ghost as a separate person but asserts belief in two persons in the Godhead.

Many monotheists have pointed out that both trinitarianism and binitarianism weaken the strict monotheism taught by the Bible. They insist that the Godhead cannot be divided into persons and that God is absolutely one.

These believers in strict monotheism fall into two classes. One class asserts that there is only one God, but does so by denying, in one way or another, the full deity of Jesus Christ. This view was represented in early church history by the dynamic monarchians, such as Paul of Samosata, and by the Arians, led by Arius. These groups relegated Jesus to the position of a created god, subordinate god, junior god, or demigod.

The second class of true monotheists believes in one God, but further believes that the fulness of the Godhead is manifested in Jesus Christ. They believe that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are manifestations, modes, offices, or relationships that the one God has displayed to man. Church historians have used the terms modalism and modalistic monarchianism to describe this view as held by such early church leaders as Noetus, Praxeas, and Sabellius. (See Chapter X.) In the twentieth century, those who believe in both the indivisible oneness of God and the full deity of Jesus Christ frequently use the term Oneness to describe their belief. They also use the terms One God and Jesus Name as adjectives to label themselves, while opponents sometimes use the misleading or derogatory designations "Jesus Only" and "New Issue." (The label "Jesus

Only" is misleading because to trinitarians it implies a denial of the Father and the Holy Spirit. However, Oneness believers do not deny the Father and Spirit, but rather see Father and Spirit as different roles of the One God who is the Spirit of Jesus.)

In summary, Christendom has produced four basic views of the Godhead: 1) trinitarianism, 2) binitarianism, 3) strict monotheism with a denial of the full deity of Jesus Christ, and 4) strict monotheism with an affirmation of the full deity of Jesus Christ, or Oneness.

Having surveyed the range of human beliefs about the Godhead, let us look at what the Word of God—the Bible—has to say on the subject.

The Old Testament Teaches There Is But One God

The classic expression of the doctrine of one God is found in Deuteronomy 6:4. "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD." This verse of Scripture has become the most distinctive and important statement of faith for the Jews. They call it the Shema, after the first word of the phrase in Hebrew, and they often quote it in English as "Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is one." (See also the *NIV*.) Traditionally, a devout Jew always tried to make this confession of faith just before death.

In Deuteronomy 6:5, God followed the announcement of the preceding verse with a command that requires total belief in and love for Him as the one and only God: "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." We should notice the importance which God attaches to Deuteronomy 6:4-5. He commands that these verses be placed in the heart (verse 6), taught to the children throughout the day (verse 7), bound on the hand and forehead (verse 8), and written on the posts and gates of houses (verse 9).

Orthodox Jews literally obey these commands today by binding *tefillin* (phylacteries) on their left forearms and on their foreheads when they pray, and by placing *mezuzzah* on their doors and gates. (*Tefillin* are small boxes tied to the body by leather straps, and *mezuzzah* are scroll-shaped containers.) Inside both types of containers are verses of Scripture handwritten in black ink by a righteous man who has observed certain purification rituals. The verses of Scripture usually are Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:18-21, Exodus 13:8-10, and 13:14-16.

During a trip to Jerusalem, where we gathered the above information,[1] we attempted to buy tefillin. The Orthodox Jewish merchant said he did not sell tefillin to Christians because they do not believe in and have the proper reverence for these verses of Scripture. When we quoted Deuteronomy 6:4 and explained our total adherence to it, his eyes lit up and he promised to sell to us on the condition that we would treat the tefillin with care and respect. His concern shows the extreme reverence and depth of belief the Jews have for the concept of one God. It also reveals that a major reason for the Jewish rejection of Christianity throughout history is the perceived distortion of the monotheistic message.

Many other Old Testament verses of Scripture emphatically affirm strict monotheism. The Ten Commandments begin with, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). God emphasized this command by stating that He is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5). In Deuteronomy 32:39, God said there is no other god with him. There is none like the LORD and there is no God beside Him (II Samuel 7:22; I Chronicles 17:20). He alone is God (Psalm 86:10). There are the emphatic declarations of God in Isaiah.

> "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour" (Isaiah 43:10-11).
>
> "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6).
>
> "Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any" (Isaiah 44:8).
>
> "I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself" (Isaiah 44:24).
>
> "There is none beside me. I am the LORD and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:6).
>
> "There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:21-22).
>
> "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isaiah 46:9).

> "I will not give my glory unto another" (Isaiah 48:11; see also Isaiah 42:8).
>
> "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth" (Isaiah 37:16).

There is only one God, who is the Creator and Father of mankind (Malachi 2:10). In the time of the Millennial Reign, there shall be only one LORD with one name (Zechariah 14:9).

In short, the Old Testament speaks of God in terms of being one. Many times the Bible calls God the Holy One (Psalm 71:22; 78:41; Isaiah 1:4; 5:19; 5:24), but never the "holy two, the holy three," or the "holy many."

A common remark by some trinitarians about the Old Testament doctrine of the oneness of God is that God only intended to emphasize His oneness as opposed to pagan deities, but that He still existed as a plurality. However, if this conjecture were true, why did not God make it clear? Why have the Jews understood not a theology of "persons" but have insisted on an absolute monotheism? Let us look at it from God's point of view. Suppose He *did* want to exclude any belief in a plurality in the Godhead. How could He do so using then-existing terminology? What strong words could He use to get His message across to His people? When we think about it, we will realize that He used the strongest possible language available to describe absolute oneness. In the preceding verses of Scriptures in Isaiah, we note the use of words and phrases such as "none, none else, none like me, none beside me, alone, by myself," and "one." Surely, God could not make it plainer that no plurality whatsoever exists in the Godhead. In short, the Old Testament affirms that God is absolutely one in number.

The New Testament Teaches There Is But One God

Jesus emphatically taught Deuteronomy 6:4, calling it the first of all the commandments (Mark 12:29-30). The New Testament presupposes the Old Testament teaching of one God and explicitly repeats this message many times.

"Seeing it is one God which shall justify" (Romans 3:30).

"There is none other God but one" (I Corinthians 8:4).

"But to us there is but one God, the Father" (I Corinthians 8:6).

"But God is one" (Galatians 3:20).

"One God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:6).

"For there is one God" (I Timothy 2:5).

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19).

Again, the Bible calls God the Holy One (I John 2:20). There is one throne in heaven and One sits upon it (Revelation 4:2).

In subsequent chapters we will explore New Testament monotheism in greater depth, but the above verses of Scripture are sufficient to establish that the

New Testament teaches one God.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the whole Bible teaches a strict monotheism. God's people have always been identified with the one-God message. God chose Abraham because of his willingness to forsake the gods of his nation and his father and to worship the one true God (Genesis 12:1-8). God chastised Israel every time she began to worship other gods, and polytheistic worship was one of the main reasons that God finally sent her into captivity (Acts 7:43). The Savior came to the world through a nation (Israel) and through a religion (Judaism) in which the people had finally purged themselves of polytheism. They were thoroughly monotheistic.

Today, God still demands a monotheistic worship of Him. We in the church are heirs of Abraham by faith, and this exalted position demands that we have the same monotheistic faith in the God of Abraham (Romans 4:13-17). As Christians in the world we must never cease to exalt and declare the message that there is only one true and living God.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

[1]November, 1980, Jerusalem, Israel. *See also,* Sir Norman Anderson, ed., *The World's Religions,* 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 73, 77.

2

THE NATURE OF GOD

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

To continue our study of the oneness of God, it is essential that we learn more about the nature of God. Of course, our small human minds cannot discover or comprehend all there is to know about God, but the Bible does describe many important characteristics and attributes that God possesses. In this chapter we will discuss some of the attributes of God that make Him God—those forming an essential part of His nature. We will also study some of the ways in which God has revealed His nature to mankind, particularly through visible manifestations.

God Is a Spirit

Jesus proclaimed this truth in John 4:24. The Bible reveals it consistently, from Genesis 1:2 ("And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters") to Revelation 22:17 ("And the Spirit and the bride say, Come"). Hebrews 12:9 calls God the Father of spirits.

What is a spirit? *Webster's Dictionary* includes in its definition of the word the following: "A supernatural, incorporeal, rational being usu. invisible to human beings but having the power to become visible at will. . .a being having an incorporeal or immaterial nature."[1] The Hebrew word translated as spirit is *ruwach*, and it can mean wind, breath, life, anger, unsubstantiality, region of the sky, or spirit of a rational being. The Greek word translated as spirit, *pneuma*, can mean a current of air, breath, blast, breeze, spirit, soul, vital principle, disposition, angel, demon, or God.[2] All three definitions emphasize that a spirit does not have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). Similarly, Jesus indicated that the Spirit of God does not have flesh and blood (Matthew 16:17). So, when the Bible says that God is a Spirit, it means that He cannot be seen or touched physically by human beings. As a Spirit, he is an intelligent, supernatural Being who does not have a physical body.

God Is Invisible

Since God is a Spirit, He is invisible unless He chooses to manifest Himself in some form visible to man. God told Moses, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18; I John 4:12). Not only has no man ever seen God, but no man can see God (I Timothy 6:16). Several times the Bible describes God as invisible (Colossians 1:15; I Timothy 1:17, Hebrews 11:27). Although man can see God when He appears in various forms, no man can see directly the invisible Spirit of God.

God Is Omnipresent (Everywhere Present)

Because God is a Spirit He can be everywhere at the same time. He is the only Spirit that is truly omnipresent; for all other spirit beings such as devils, angels, and Satan himself can be confined to specific locations (Mark 5:10; Jude 6; Revelation 20:1-3).

Although God is omnipresent, we cannot equate Him with the nature, substance, or forces of the world (which would be pantheism), because He does have individuality, personality, and intelligence.

Soloman recognized God's omnipresence when he prayed at the dedication of the Temple, saying, "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee" (I Kings 8:27; see II Chronicles 2:6; 6:18). God declared His omnipresence by saying, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool" (Isaiah 66:1; see also Acts 7:49). Paul preached that the Lord is "not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27-28). Perhaps the most beautiful description of God's omnipresence is found in Psalm 139:7-13: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."

If God is omnipresent, why does the Bible describe Him as being in heaven? Here are several reasons. 1) This teaches that God is transcendent. In other words, He is beyond human understanding and He is not limited to this earth. 2) It refers to the center of God's reasoning and activity—His headquarters, so to speak. 3) It refers to God's immediate presence; that is, the fulness of God's glory and power, which no mortal man can see and live (Exodus 33:20). 4) Also, it may refer to the visible manifestation of God to the angels in heaven. It cannot mean God lacks omnipresence, is limited to one place, or is limited to a body.

Similarly, when the Bible says God came to earth or appeared to a man, it does not negate His omnipresence. It simply means the focus of His activity has shifted to earth at least as far as a certain individual or a certain situation is concerned. When God comes to earth, heaven is not empty. He is still just as much in heaven as ever. He can act simultaneously in

heaven and on earth, or at several locations on earth. It is very important that we recognize the magnitude of God's omnipresence and not limit it by our human experience.

Does God Have a Body?

Since God is an invisible Spirit and is omnipresent, He certainly does not have a body as we know it. He did assume various forms and temporary manifestations throughout the Old Testament so that man could see Him. (See the section on theophanies later in this chapter.) However, the Bible does not record any permanent bodily manifestation of God until Jesus Christ was born. Of course, in Christ, God had a human body and now has a glorified, immortal human body.

Outside of temporary manifestations of God and outside of the New Testament revelation of God in Christ, we believe scriptural references to the eyes, hands, arms, feet, heart, and other bodily parts of God are examples of figurative language or anthropomorphisms (interpretations of the nonhuman in terms of the human so that man can understand).

In other words, the Bible describes infinite God in finite, human terms in order that we may better comprehend Him. For example, the heart of God denotes His intellect and His emotions, not a blood-pumping organ (Genesis 6:6; 8:21). When God said heaven was His throne and earth was His footstool, He described His omnipresence, not a pair of literal feet propped up on the globe (Isaiah 66:1). When God said His right hand spanned the heavens, He described His great power and not a large hand stretching through the atmosphere (Isaiah 48:13). "The eyes of the LORD are in every place" does not mean that God has physical eyes in every location but indicates His omnipresence and omniscience (Proverbs 15:3). When Jesus cast devils out by the finger of God, He did not pull down a giant finger from heaven, but He exercised the power of God (Luke 11:20). The blast of God's nostrils was not literal particles emitted by giant heavenly nostrils, but the strong east wind sent by God to part the Red Sea (Exodus 15:8; 14:21). In fact, literal interpretation of all the visions and physical descriptions of God would lead to the belief that God has wheels (Daniel 7:9). In short, we believe God as a Spirit does not have a body unless He chooses to manifest Himself in a bodily form, which He did in the person of Jesus Christ. (See Chapter IV.)

Some say that in the Old Testament God had a spirit body visible to other spirit beings such as angels. They raise this hypothesis because human spirits seem to have a recognizable form visible to other spirits (Luke 16:22-31) and because some passages indicate the angels and Satan could see a visible manifestation of God in the Old Testament (I Kings 22:19-22; Job 1:6). However, God did not need a spirit body to do this because He could have manifested Himself at various times to other spirits just as He did to man. One key verse of Scripture implies that ordinarily God is *not* visible even to spirit beings unless He chooses to manifest Himself in some way: "God was manifest in the flesh. . .seen of angels" (I Timothy 3:16). At the least, if God did have some type of spirit body He certainly was not confined to it like other spirit beings are confined to their bodies; for then He would not be truly omnipresent. For example, God's omnipresence means He could have appeared simultaneously to men on earth and to angels in heaven. Also, we must realize that in New Testament times God has chosen to reveal Himself fully through Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:9). There is no possibility of separating God and Jesus, and there is no God visible outside of Jesus.

God is Omniscient (All Knowing)

Psalm 139:1-6 teaches us that God knows everything, including our movements, thoughts, paths, ways, and words. Job confessed, "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee" (Job 42:2). God has complete knowledge of everything, including foreknowledge of the future (Acts 2:23). Like omnipresence, omniscience is an attribute that belongs solely to God. He is "the only wise God" (I Timothy 1:17). The Bible does not identify any other being (including Satan) who can read all the thoughts of man, foresee the future with certainty, or know everything there is to know.

God is Omnipotent (All Powerful)

God calls Himself the Almighty many times throughout the Bible (Genesis 17:1; 35:11, etc.). He has all the power there is, and no being can exercise any power unless God allows it (Romans 13:1). Again, only God is omnipotent, for only one being can have all power. First Timothy 6:15 describes God as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." The saints of God in heaven will proclaim "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Revelation 19:6). God beautifully describes His great omnipotence in Job, chapters 38 to 41.

The only limitations God has are those He willingly places on Himself or those resulting from His moral nature. Since He is holy and sinless, He abides by His own moral limitations. Therefore, it is impossible for God to lie or contradict His own Word (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18).

God is Eternal

God is eternal, immortal, and everlasting (Deuteronomy 33:27; Isaiah 9:6; I Timothy 1:17). He is the first and the last (Isaiah 44:6). He had no beginning and will have no ending; other spiritual beings, including man, are immortal as far as the future is concerned but only God is eternal in the past and future.

God is Immutable (Unchanging)

God's character and attributes never change: "I am the LORD, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). It is true that God sometimes repents (changes His course of

action in relation to man), but this is only because man changes his actions. God's nature remains the same; only His future course of action changes to respond to the changes of man. For example, the repentance of Nineveh caused God to change His plans to destroy that city (Jonah 3:10). Also, the Bible sometimes speaks of God repenting in the sense of grieving or sorrowing rather than in the sense of changing His mind (Genesis 6:6).

God Has Individuality, Personality, and Rationality

God is an intelligent being with a will (Romans 9:19) and reasoning ability (Isaiah 1:18). He has an intelligent mind (Romans 11:33-34). That God has emotions is indicated from the fact that man is an emotional being, for God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27). The essential emotional nature of God is love, but He has many emotions such as delight, pity or compassion, hatred of sin and zeal for righteousness (Psalm 18:19; Psalm 103:13; Proverbs 6:16; Exodus 20:5). He is slow to anger, but He can be provoked to anger (Psalm 103:8; Deuteronomy 4:25). God can be grieved (Genesis 6:6) and blessed (Psalm 103:1). Of course, His emotions transcend our emotions, but we can only describe Him by using terms that describe human emotions. (For further proof that God is an individual being with personality and rationality, see the discussions in this chapter of God's omniscience and His moral attributes.)

God's Moral Attributes

"God is love" (I John 4:8, 16). Love is the essence of God; it is His very nature. God has many other qualities and attributes, many of which stem from His love.

God's Moral Nature

1.	love	(I John 4:8)
2.	light	(I John 1:5)
3.	holiness	(I Peter 1:16)
4.	mercy	(Psalm 103:8)
5.	gentleness	(Psalm 18:35)
6.	righteousness	(Psalm 129:4)
7.	goodness	(Romans 2:4)
8.	perfection	(Matthew 5:48)
9.	justice	(Isaiah 45:21)
10.	faithfulness	(I Corinthians 10:13)
11.	truth	(John 17:17)
12.	grace	(Psalm 103:8)

These moral attributes of God are not contradictory, but work in harmony. For example, God's holiness required an immediate separation between God and man when man sinned. Then, God's righteousness and justice required death as the penalty for sin, but God's love and mercy sought pardon. God satisfied both justice and mercy by the death of Christ at Calvary and the resulting plan of salvation.

We enjoy the benefits of God's mercy when we accept the atoning work of Christ and apply it to our lives through faith. When we accept and obey by faith God's plan of salvation, God imputes the righteousness of Christ to us (Romans 3:21-5:21). Therefore, God can justly forgive us of sin (I John 1:9) and can restore us to communion with Him without violating His holiness.

The death of the innocent, sinless Christ and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us satisfy God's justice and holiness. If, however, we reject Christ's atonement, then we are left to face God's judgment alone. In this case His holiness demands separation from sinful man and His justice demands death for sinful man. So justice and mercy are complementary, not contradictory, aspects of God's nature, as are holiness and love. If we accept God's love and mercy He will help us satisfy His justice and holiness. If we reject God's love and mercy we must face His justice and holiness alone (Romans 11:22).

Of course, the above list does not exhaust the qualities of God. God is transcendent and no human can comprehend Him fully. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Romans 11:33-34).

Theophanies

One way that God revealed Himself in the Old Testament and dealt with man on man's level was through the use of theophanies. A theophany is a visible manifestation of God, and we usually think of it as temporary in nature. As we have seen, God is invisible to man. To make Himself visible, He manifested Himself in a physical form. Even though no one can see the Spirit of God, he can see a representation of God. Below are some ways in which God chose to manifest Himself in the Old Testament.

God appeared to Abraham in a vision, as a smoking furnace and burning lamp, and as a man (Genesis 15:1; 15:17; 18:1-33). In this last instance, God and two angels appeared in the form of three men (18:2) and ate food provided by Abraham. The two angels left to go to Sodom while God remained to talk to Abraham (Genesis 18:22; 19:1).

God appeared to Jacob in a dream and as a man (Genesis 28:12-16; 32:24-32). On the latter occasion Jacob wrestled with the man and proclaimed, "I have seen God face to face." The Bible also describes this appearance as "the angel" (Hosea 12:4).

God appeared to Moses in a cloud of glory and in fire on Mount Sinai, spoke to him face to face in the Tabernacle, and revealed to him His back (partial glory), but not His face (all His glory) (Exodus 24:12-18; 33:9-11; 33:18-23). These references to God's face and God's glory probably are metaphoric of the presence of God and could apply to many different types of manifestations.

God manifested Himself in the sight of all Israel through thunder, lightnings, a cloud, a voice of a trumpet, smoke, fire, and earthquakes (Exodus 19:11-19; Deuteronomy 5:4-5, 22-27). He also showed His glory and sent fire from His presence in the sight of all Israel (Leviticus 9:23-24; 10:1-2).

Job saw God in a whirlwind (Job 38:1; 42:5).

Various prophets saw visions of God (Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1:26-28; 8:1-4; Daniel 7:2, 9; Amos 9:1). To Ezekiel He appeared in the form of a man, enveloped in fire. To Daniel He appeared in a night vision as the Ancient of Days. Many other verses of Scripture tell us that God appeared to someone but do not describe in what manner He did so. For example, God appeared to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Samuel (Genesis 12:7; 17:1; 26:2, 24; 35:9-15; I Samuel 3:21). Similarly, God descended on Mount Sinai and stood with Moses, revealed Himself to seventy-four leaders of Israel, came down in a pillar of cloud and stood in front of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, came at night to Balaam, and met Balaam on two other occasions (Exodus 34:5; 24:9-11; Numbers 12:4-9; 23:3-10, 16-24).

In addition to the appearances mentioned above, the Bible records other manifestations that many believe were God Himself. In Joshua 5:13-15, a man with a sword appeared to Joshua and identified himself as the "captain of the host of the LORD." This title and the fact that he did not rebuke Joshua for worshiping him (unlike Revelation 19:9-10; 22:8-10) suggest that this was really a manifestation of God. On the other hand, the wording of this passage leaves open the possibility that Joshua did not worship the captain, but worshiped God for the captain's appearance.

The Angel of the LORD

Some of the numerous appearance of "the angel of the LORD" seem to be theophanies. The angel of the LORD appeared to Hagar, spoke as thought he were God, and was called God by her (Genesis 16:7-13). The Bible says the angel of the LORD appeared to Moses in the burning bush, but then says God talked to Moses on that occasion (Exodus 3; Acts 7:30-38). Exodus 13:21 says the LORD went before Israel in a pillar of cloud, while Exodus 14:19 says the angel of God was with the pillar of cloud. The angel of the LORD appeared to Israel in Judges 2:1-5 and spoke as God. Judges 6:11-24 describes the appearance of the angel of the LORD to Gideon and then says the LORD looked on Gideon. Again, the angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah and his wife, and they believed they had seen God (Judges 13:2-23).

Other visitations of the angel of the LORD do not indicate whether they were manifestations of God Himself or not, although frequently people assume that they were. Examples are the appearances to Abraham at Mount Moriah and to Balaam (Genesis 22:11-18; Numbers 22:22-35). Sometimes the angel of the LORD is clearly *not* a manifestation of God, but an angel identified as a separate being other than the LORD God. Examples are the appearances to David and to Zechariah (II Samuel 24:16; I Chronicles 21:15-30; Zechariah 1:8-19). (See Chapter VII for

further discussion.) The angel of the Lord in the New Testament apparently is nothing more than an angel, and certainly is not Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:20; 2:13; 28:2; Acts 8:26).

In analyzing all these verses of Scripture, some say that the angel of the LORD is always a direct manifestation of God. However, some of the instances mentioned above do not support this view and two of them actually contradict it. Others say the angel of the LORD is a manifestation of God in some instances and not in others. This second view seems to be consistent with the Scriptures.

A third view, however, is that the angel of the LORD is never the LORD but always a literal angel. To support this last view, one would emphasize that angels are mouthpieces, messengers, and agents of God. In other words, this view contends that it is proper to say "the LORD said" or "the LORD did" even though He said or did it through the agency of an angel. Under this view, a description of an act by God in the account of an angelic appearance is simply a shorthand way of saying God acted through the angel. Since the biblical writers make clear at the beginning of the accounts that an angel was the direct agent, no ambiguity or discrepancy needs to exist. In this view, the people that acknowledged the visitation of God were either mistaken in their belief that they had seen God Himself or, more plausibly, they recognized that God was using an angel to speak to them and therefore addressed God through the angel. There is another way to reconcile this third view with verses of Scripture that identify the angel of the LORD with the

LORD Himself: namely, the angel visibly appeared but the LORD was also invisibly present. Therefore, references to the LORD acting or talking could mean literally the LORD and not the angel.

In summary, it is evident that the angel of the LORD in the Old Testament was not always God Himself. A person can plausibly argue that the angel of the LORD was never an actual theophany, but he cannot seriously contend that the angel of the LORD was always a theophany. The most simple explanation is that the phrase, "The angel of the LORD," sometimes refers to a theophany of God but at other times denotes nothing more than an ordinary angel.

A trinitarian scholar sums up the predominant view as follows:

> "In the Old Testament the angel of the LORD might be only a messenger of God (the Hebrew word itself means messenger), distinct from God himself (2 Sam. 24:16), or he might be identified with the LORD himself speaking in the first person. . .It is typical of Old Testament theophanies that God cannot be sharply drawn. . . God is free to make his presence known, even while humans must be protected from his immediate presence."[3]

Melchizedek

Many regard Melchizedek as a theophany (Genesis 14:18). Hebrews 7:3 says he was without father, mother, and descent. This could mean that he was God in human form, or it could mean simply that his

geneological origin was not recorded. Hebrews 7:4 does call him a man. Regardless of whether one considers him to be an ordinary man or a theophany of God in the form of a man, he was a type or foreshadowing of Christ (Hebrews 7:1-17).

The Fourth Man in the Fire

One supposed theophany is the fourth man who appeared in the fire when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into the furnace (Daniel 3:24-25). The heathen king Nebuchadnezzar said, "Lo, I see four men loose. . .and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25). However, in the original language (Aramaic) there is no definite article before *Son*: that is, there is no *the* before *Son* in this passage. The *NIV* and *TAB* render this phrase as "a son of the gods." The king was using heathen terminology and had no knowledge of the future arrival of the only begotten Son of God. Most likely the king saw an angel, for he described this manifestation as an angel (Daniel 3:28). It appears that the phrase "sons of God" can refer to angelic beings (Job 38:7). At the most, what Nebuchadnezzar saw could only be a temporary theophany of God. Certainly, this was not a view of the Son of God described in the New Testament, for the Son had not been born and the Sonship had not begun. (See Chapter V.)

Are There New Testament Theophanies?

The New Testament records no theophanies of

Are There New Testament Theophanies?

The New Testament records no theophanies of God in human form outside of Jesus Christ. Of course, Christ was more than a theophany; He was not just God appearing in the form of a man but He was God clothed with a real human body and nature. The angel of the Lord in Matthew 1:20, 2:13, 28:2 and Acts 8:26 seems to be an angel and nothing more; there is no evidence to the contrary. It is clear in these passages that the angel is not Jesus Christ. This fits in well with the conclusion that the angel of the LORD in the Old Testament was not always the LORD Himself. The only possible New Testament theophany is the dove at the baptism of Christ. (See Chapter 8 - NEW TESTAMENT EXPLANATIONS: THE GOSPEL for a full discussion of the dove and the special reason for its appearance.)

Why this lack of New Testament theophanies? The reason is that there is no need for them. God is fully expressed in Jesus Christ. Jesus fully declares and reveals the Father (John 1:18). Jesus is the express image of the invisible God, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3).

Conclusion

God in human form outside of Jesus Christ. Of course Christ was more than a theophany. He was not just God appearing in the form of human but He was God clothe

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Conclusion

In the Old Testament God chose to reveal aspects of His nature to man through various theophanies. In the New Testament era, the progressive revelation of God through theophanies culminated and found perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This leads us to Chapters III and IV and to the great truth that Jesus is the one God of the Old Testament.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

[1] *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*, unabridged, p. 2198.

[2] James Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1890).

[3] William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979), pp. 41-42.

3

THE NAMES AND TITLES OF GOD

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Even though man cannot fully comprehend God, God has employed several methods to reveal Himself to mankind. One of these methods is the use of different names or titles to identify Himself.

The Significance of a Name

The use of names in Bible times, especially in Old Testament times, carried much more significance than it does in our day. People often used names to reveal something about the characteristics, history, or nature of individuals, and God did too. Thus, God changed the name of Abram (meaning high father) to Abraham (father of a multitude), and the name of Jacob (heel-catcher, supplanter) to Israel (he will rule as God). Even in the New Testament, Jesus changed the name of Simon (hearing) to Peter (a rock). The *Amplified Bible* quotes in a footnote on I Kings 8:43 from *Davis Dictionary of the Bible, Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible,* and *The New Bible Dictionary* to point out the significance of the name of God. "To know the *name* of God is to witness the manifestation of those attributes and apprehend that character which the name denotes. . .God's *name,* that is, His self-revelation. . .The name signifies the active presence of the person in the fulness of the revealed character." Baylor University professors Flanders and Cresson state: "To the ancients the name is a part of the person, an extension of the personality of the individual."[1]

God used names as a means of progressive self-revelation. For example, in Exodus 6:3 God said, "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known unto them." Verses 4 through 8 make clear that the significance to Israel of the name Jehovah was its association with redemption and salvation. We know that Abraham did use the name Jehovah (Genesis 22:14); however, God did not make known to him the full significance of this name in its redemptive aspect. So, in Exodus 6:3 God promised to reveal Himself to His people in a new way. That is, He began to associate His name with a new understanding of His character and presence.

In addition to using names to manifest His character, God used His name to manifest His presence. At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon acknowledged that God was omnipresent and that no temple could contain Him (I Kings 8:27). Since God fills the universe, Solomon asked how the Temple, a man-made structure, could contain God. Then he answered his own question by reminding God of His promise: "My name shall be there" (I Kings 8:29). Although God's omnipresence could not be confined to the Temple, yet the fulness of His character as represented by His name could dwell there.

Solomon went on to pray "that all people of the earth may know thy name" (I Kings 8:43). Once again, this links the name of God with a revelation of His character. God Himself used the concept of His name to represent the revelation of His nature and power. He told Pharaoh, "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Exodus 9:16).

The name of God represents His authority as well as His power. For example, He invested His name in the angel that led the Israelites (Exodus 23:21). This was probably a theophany of God since the passage expresses the idea that the angel acted with all the authority of God Himself.

God's name represents the following: 1) God's presence, 2) the revelation of His character, 3) His power and 4) His authority.

Here are some other points that show the importance God places upon His name:

1. God demands fear (reverence, respect) for His name (Deuteronomy 28:58-59). He commands man not to take His name in vain (Exodus 20:7).

2. God warns His people not to forget His name (Psalm 44:20-21; Jeremiah 23:25-27).

3. God promises a blessing for those who know His name (Psalm 91:14-16). There is a blessing for those who think upon His name (Malachi 3:16).

With the significance of the name in mind, let us examine some names used for God in the Old Testament.

Names or Titles of God
In the Old Testament

Below is a list of the primary words used to designate God in the Old Testament.[2]

Old Testament Names For God

English	Hebrew	Example of Scripture
1. God	Elohim	Genesis 1:1
2. God	El	Genesis 14:18
3. God	Eloah	Nehemiah 9:17
4. God	Elah (Aramaic form)	Daniel 2:18
5. GOD	YHWH (Yahweh)	Genesis 15:2
6. LORD	YHWH or YH	Genesis 2:4
7. JEHOVAH	YHWH	Exodus 6:3
8. JAH	YH (Yah)	Psalm 68:4
9. Lord	Adon	Joshua 3:11
10. Lord	Adonai	Genesis 15:2
11. I AM THAT I AM	Eheyeh asher Eheyeh	Exodus 3:14

12. I AM	Eheyeh	Exodus 3:14
13. Most High God	El-Elyon	Genesis 14:18
14. The God of sight	El-Roiy	Genesis 16:13
15. Almighty God	El-Shaddai	Genesis 17:1
16. Everlasting God	El-Olam	Genesis 21:33

El means strength, mighty, almighty, or, by extension, deity. Eloah is probably derived from el, and always refers to deity. Elah is the Aramaic (Chaldean) form of Eloah. Elohim is the plural form of Eloah, and the Old Testament uses this word more than any other to mean God. In this case, the Hebrew plural is an intensive form denoting the greatness, majesty, and multiple attributes of God. (See Chapter VII.) The Bible also uses the word *elohim* to refer to false gods (Judges 8:33), spirit beings (I Samuel 28:13), and human rulers or judges (Psalm 82). In these cases it is translated *god* or *gods.* Adon means ruler, master, or lord whether human, angelic, or divine. Adonai is the emphatic form of Adon, and specifically refers to the Lord (God).

Yahweh (Jehovah) is the redemptive name of God in the Old Testament (Exodus 6:3-8), and the unique name by which the one true God distinguished Himself in the Old Testament from all other gods (Isaiah 42:8). It means the "Self-Existing One or the Eternal One." This concept also appears in the phrases "I AM THAT I AM" and "I AM," used by God of Himself. Flanders and Cresson explain that Yahweh is the third person form of the verb "to be" in Hebrew.[3] Yahweh means "He is." When used by God, the verb form is in the first person, or "I Am." In other words, Yahweh and "I Am" are different forms of the same verb. Furthermore, both connote an active (possibly causative or creative) existence rather than just a passive existence.

In the English, Jah appears once in the *KJV* as an abbreviation for Jehovah (Psalm 68:4). Jehovah appears by itself only four times in the *KJV* (Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; Isaiah 26:4) and only three times as part of a compound name (Genesis 22:14; Exodus 17:15; Judges 6:24). In every other place, the King James translators used GOD or LORD (large and small capitals) to represent YHWH or its abbreviation YH. In most cases they used LORD (example: Genesis 2:4), using GOD only when Adonai (Lord) also appeared in the same phrase (example: Genesis 15:2).

In using LORD as a substitute for YHWH, they were simply following an ancient Jewish tradition of substituting Adonai for YHWH when copying or reading the Scriptures. This custom arose because the Jews wanted to safeguard against taking God's name in vain, which would violate the Third Commandment (Exodus 20:7). They felt that by constantly repeating the sacred name of God they might begin to treat it too casually and lightly. The name of God was so holy and sacred that they did not feel worthy to use it.

Jesus and the apostles also followed this custom. The New Testament uses the Greek word *kurios,* meaning Lord, when quoting Old Testament scriptures containing YHWH (Matthew 3:3; 4:7, etc.).

Since ancient Hebrew did not use written vowels and since the Jews stopped speaking the sacred name, no one knows what the original pronunciation of YHWH was. All we have are the four Hebrew letters (called the tetragrammaton), which are usually transliterated as YHWH or JHVH and pronounced Yahweh (Hebrew) or Jehovah (English). We will use Jehovah in the rest of the book to conform to traditional English and *KJV* usage.

Compound Names of Jehovah

In addition to the above designations for God, the Old Testament uses a number of compound names of Jehovah to describe God and to reveal Him further. They are listed in the table below.[4] Numbers 1, 2, and 5 appear as such in most English versions; the rest appear in the Hebrew but are translated in the English. Moreover, the New Testament uses "the Lord of Sabaoth" twice (Romans 9:29; James 5:4).

Compound Names of Jehovah

Name	Scripture	Meaning
1. Jehovah-jireh	Genesis 22:14	The LORD will see (i.e., will provide)
2. Jehovah-rapha	Exodus 15:26	The LORD that heals
3. Jehovah-nissi	Exodus 17:15	The LORD our banner (i.e., victory)
4. Jehovah-m'kaddesh	Exodus 31:13	The LORD that sanctifies
5. Jehovah-shalom	Judges 6:24	The LORD our peace
6. Jehovah-saboath	I Samuel 1:3	The LORD of hosts (i.e., almighty)
7. Jehovah-elyon	Psalm 7:17	The LORD most high
8. Jehovah-raah	Psalm 23:1	The LORD my shepherd
9. Jehovah-hoseenu	Psalm 95:6	The LORD our maker
10. Jehovah-tsidkenu	Jeremiah 23:6	The LORD our righteousness
11. Jehovah-shammah	Ezekiel 48:35	The LORD is present

The Progressive Revelation Of the Name

We find that in the Old Testament God progressively revealed more about Himself as various needs arose in the lives of man, and He used names to express this self-revelation. When Abraham needed a lamb to sacrifice, God revealed Himself as Jehovah-jireh, the LORD that provides. When Israel needed deliverance, God revealed that His name Jehovah had a previously unknown significance with respect to deliverance and salvation (Exodus 6:3-8). When Israel needed protection from disease and sickness, God revealed Himself as Jehovah-rapha, the LORD that heals. When Israel needed victory over enemies, God revealed Himself as Jehovah-nissi, the LORD our banner, i.e. victory. Thus, the names and titles described above all reveal important aspects about the nature of God.

However, none of them is a complete revelation of God's nature. Many people in the Old Testament realized this; they desired to know more of God and expressed their desire by asking to know His name. When Jacob wrestled with the man at Peniel (a manifestation of God), he asked, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name." God did not reveal His name but did bless him

(Genesis 32:29). Manoah, the father of Samson, asked the angel of the LORD what his name was and received this reply: "Why asketh thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" (Judges 13:18). The prophet Agur asked about God, "What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" (Proverbs 30:4). He was looking into the future, trying to see by what name God would reveal Himself when He would appear as the Son. Zechariah prophesied that a time would come when the LORD would be king over all the earth, and "in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one" (Zechariah 14:9).

The Name Jesus

When the fulness of time came, God did satisfy the longings of His people and revealed Himself in all His power and glory through the name Jesus. Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name variously rendered as Jehoshua (Numbers 13:16), Jeshua (Ezra 2:2), or Joshua (Exodus 17:9). Both Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8 show that Jesus is the same name as Joshua. (See *NIV*.)

Jesus means Jehovah-Savior, Jehovah our Salvation, or Jehovah is Salvation.[5] This is why the angel said, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The identification of the name Jesus with salvation is particularly evident because the Hebrew for Jeshua is practically identical to the Hebrew for salvation, especially since ancient

Hebrew did not use written vowels. In fact, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* transliterates Jeshua as Yeshuwa and the Hebrew word for salvation as Yeshuwah. Although others have borne the name Jehoshua, Joshua, or Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who actually lived up to that name. He is the only One who is actually what that name describes.

Jesus is the culmination of all the Old Testament names of God. It is the highest, most exalted name ever revealed to mankind. (See Chapter IV for proof that Jesus fulfills all the eleven compound names of Jehovah given above.) The name of Jesus is the name of God that He promised to reveal when He said, "Therefore my people shall know my name" (Isaiah 52:6). It is the one name of Zechariah 14:9 that encompasses and includes all the other names of God within its meaning.

The New Testament church is identified by the name of Jesus. In fact Jesus said we would be hated among all men for His name's sake (Matthew 10:22). The Early Church was persecuted for the name of Jesus (Acts 5:28; 9:21; 15:26), and they considered it a privilege to be counted worthy to suffer for His name (Acts 5:41). Peter stated that the lame man at the gate Beautiful was healed "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (Acts 4:10). He then explained the supremacy and necessity of this name in receiving salvation: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The Apostle Paul wrote, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Philippians 2:9-10).

Because of the exalted position of this name, we are exhorted to rely upon the name of Jesus in all we do or say: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17). We teach and preach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:17-18; 5:28). We cast out devils, speak in tongues, receive supernatural power and protection, and pray for the sick—all in the name of Jesus (Mark 16:17-18; James 5:14). Signs and wonders are done by the name of Jesus (Acts 4:30). We pray and make requests known to God in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14; 16:23). We gather together in the name of Jesus (Matthew 18:20). We baptize in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38).

Does this mean the name of Jesus is a kind of magical formula? No. For the name of Jesus to be effective we must have faith in His name (Acts 3:16). We must know and have faith in the One represented by that name (Acts 19:13-17). The name of Jesus is unique because unlike any other name it represents the presence of its owner. It represents God's presence, power, and work. When we speak the name of Jesus in faith, Jesus Himself is actually present and begins to work. The power does not come from the way the name sounds, but it comes because the utterance of the name in faith demonstrates obedience to the Word of God and faith in the work of Jesus. When we call His name in faith, Jesus manifests His presence, performs the work, and meets the need.

Through the name Jesus, therefore, God reveals Himself fully. To the extent that we see, know, honor, believe, and receive Jesus, to that extent we see, know, honor, believe, and receive God the Father (John 5:23; 8:19; 12:44-45; 13:20; 14:7-9). If we deny Jesus, we deny the Father (I John 2:23), but if we use the name of Jesus we glorify the Father (Colossians 3:17).

The Bible foretold that the Messiah would declare the name of the LORD (Psalm 22:22; see Hebrews 2:12). Jesus asserted that He had manifested and declared the name of the Father (John 17:6, 26). In fact, He inherited His name from the Father (Hebrews 1:4). How did Jesus manifest and declare the Father's name? He did so by unveiling the meaning of the name through the works that He did, which were the works of Jehovah (John 14:10-11). Just as God in the Old Testament progressively revealed more about His nature and His name by responding to the needs of His people, so Jesus in the New Testament fully revealed the nature and name of God through miracles, healings, casting out of devils, and forgiveness of sins. Jesus declared the Father's name by His works; for by them He proved that He was indeed the Father, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. (See Isaiah 35:4-6 with Luke 7:19-22.) By demonstrating the power of God in accordance with the prophecies, He proved that Jesus was the name of the Father.

Why is the name of Jesus the full revelation of God? Simply because Jesus is Jehovah and in Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, including the role of Father (Colossians 2:9). We will study this great truth in Chapter IV.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III

[1] Henry Flanders, Jr. and Bruce Cresson, *Introduction to the Bible* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973), p. 61.

[2] Definitions and spellings are from Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance.*

[3] Flanders and Cresson, p. 79.

[4] *See,* Francis Derk, *The Names of Christ,* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1969) pp. 152-153; Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance.*

[5] Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (1887; rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), I, 16; W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1940), p. 274.

4

JESUS IS GOD

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

The fact that Jesus is God is as firmly established in Scripture as the fact that God is one. The Bible teaches that Jesus is fully God and fully man. In this chapter we will discuss the former; in Chapter V the latter.

In the next few sections we will present and discuss scriptural proofs that Jesus is God, numbering them for the reader's convenience.

The Old Testament Testifies That Jesus Is God

1. Isaiah 9:6 is one of the most powerful proofs that Jesus is God: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful,

Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." The terms *child* and *son* refer to the Incarnation or manifestation of "The mighty God" and "The everlasting Father."

2. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be called Immanuel, that is, God with us (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23).

3. Isaiah described the Messiah as both a branch out of Jesse (the father of David) and as the root of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1, 10; see also Revelation 22:16). According to the flesh He was a descendant (branch) of Jesse and David, but according to His Spirit He was their Creator and source of life (root). Jesus used this concept to confound the Pharisees when He quoted Psalm 110:1 and asked, in essence, "How could David call the Messiah Lord when the Messiah was to be the son (descendant) of David?" (Matthew 22:41-46).

4. Isaiah 35:4-6 shows that Jesus is God: "Behold, your God. . .he will come and save you." This passage goes on to say that when God comes the eyes of the blind would be opened, the ears of the deaf would be unstopped, the lame would leap, and the tongue of the dumb would speak. Jesus applied this passage of Scripture to Himself (Luke 7:22) and, of course, His ministry did produce all of these things.

5. Isaiah 40:3 declares that one would cry in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy when he prepared the way for Jesus (Matthew 3:3); so Jesus is the LORD (Jehovah) and our God.

6. Micah 5:2 proves that the Messiah is God. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah. . .out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Thus the Old Testament clearly states that the Messiah and Savior to come would be God Himself.

The New Testament Proclaims That Jesus is God

1. Thomas confessed Jesus as both Lord and God (John 20:28).

2. According to Acts 20:28, the church was purchased with God's own blood, namely the blood of Jesus.

3. Paul described Jesus as "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13; *NIV* has "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ").

4. Peter described Him as "God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:1; *NIV* and *TAB* both have "our God and Savior Jesus Christ").

5. Our bodies are the temples of God (I Corinthians 3:16-17), yet we know Christ dwells in our hearts (Ephesians 3:17).

6. The Book of Colossians strongly emphasizes the deity of Christ. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9; see also 1:19). According to these verses of Scripture, Jesus is not just a part of God, but *all* of God is resident in Him. If there were several persons in the Godhead, according to Colossians 2:9 they would all be resident in the bodily form of Jesus. We are complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). Whatever we

need from God we can find in Jesus Christ alone. (For further discussion of Colossians 2:9 and other proofs of Christ's deity in Colossians, see Chapter IX.)

We conclude that the New Testament testifies to the full deity of Jesus Christ.

God Was Manifest in the Flesh as Jesus

The statement that Jesus is God necessarily implies that God took on human flesh. This is in fact what the Bible says.

1. "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Timothy 3:16; see verse 15 for further confirmation that God is the subject of verse 16). God was manifest (made visible) in flesh; God was justified (shown to be right) in the Spirit; God was seen of angels; God was believed on in the world; and God was received up into glory. How and when did all of this happen? In Jesus Christ.

2. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . .And the Word was made flesh. . ." (John 1:1, 14). Literally, the Word (God) was tabernacled or tented in flesh. When did God tabernacle or robe Himself in flesh? In Jesus Christ. Both verses of Scripture prove that Jesus is God—that He is God manifest (revealed, made known, made evident, displayed, shown) in flesh.

God is a Spirit—without flesh and blood and invisible to man. In order to make Himself visible to man and in order to shed innocent blood for our sins, He had to put on flesh. (For more on the purposes of the Son, see Chapter V.) Jesus is not another God or a part of God, but He is the God of the Old Testament robed in flesh. He is the Father; He is Jehovah who came in flesh to bridge the gap between man and God that man's sin had created. He put on flesh as a man puts on a coat.

Many verses of Scripture declare Jesus Christ to be the God of the Old Testament robed in flesh for the purpose of self-revelation and reconciliation.

3. "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (II Corinthians 5:19).

4. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared [spoken, revealed] him" (John 1:18).

5. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. . .the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. . ." (Hebrew 1:1-3).

6. Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15; II Corinthians 4:4).

7. He is God veiled in flesh (Hebrews 10:20). As Abraham prophesied, probably without understanding the full meaning of his own words, "God will provide himself a lamb" (Genesis 22:8). God indeed provided a body for Himself: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" (Hebrews 10:5).

8. Jesus was the builder of the house (God the Father and Creator) and also a son over his own house (Hebrews 3:3-6).

9. He came to His own creation and to His own chosen people but they did not recognize Him or receive Him (John 1:10-11).

The Word

John 1 beautifully teaches the concept of God manifest in flesh. In the beginning was the Word (Greek, *Logos*). The Word was not a separate person or a separate god any more than a man's word is a separate person from him. Rather the Word was a thought or a plan in the mind of God. It was with God in the beginning and was a part of Him (John 1:1). The Incarnation existed in the mind of God before the world began. Indeed, in the mind of God the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world (I Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8).

In Greek usage, *logos* can mean the expression or plan as it exists in the mind of the proclaimer—as a play in the mind of a playwright—or it can mean the thought as uttered or otherwise physically expressed—as a play that is enacted on stage. John 1 says the Logos existed in the mind of God from the beginning of time. When the fulness of time was come, God put that plan in action. He put flesh on that plan in the form of the man Jesus Christ. The Logos is God expressed. As John Miller says, the Logos is "God uttering Himself."[1] In fact, *TAB* translates the last phrase of John 1:1 as, "The Word was God Himself." Flanders and Cresson say, "The Word was God's means of self disclosure."[2] This thought is further brought out by

verse 14, which says the incarnated Word had the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, and by verse 18, which says that the Son has declared the Father.

In Greek philosophy, the Logos came to mean reason or wisdom as the controlling principle of the universe. In John's day, some Greek philosophers and Jewish theologians influenced by Greek thought (especially the Jewish thinker, Philo of Alexandria) regarded the Logos as an inferior, secondary deity or as an emanation from God in time.[3] Some Christian heresies, including an emerging form of Gnosticism, were already incorporating these theories into their doctrines, and therefore relegating Jesus to an inferior role. John deliberately used their own terminology to refute these doctrines and to declare the truth. The Word was *not* inferior to God; it was God (John 1:1). The Word did *not* emanate from God over a period of time; it was with God in the beginning (John 1:1-2). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was none other than the Word, or God, revealed in flesh. Note also that the Greek word *pros,* translated "with" in verse 1, is the same word translated "pertaining to" in Hebrews 2:17 and 5:1. John 1:1 could include in its meanings, therefore, the following: "The Word pertained to God and the Word was God," or, "The Word belonged to God and was God."

Jesus Was God From the Beginning Of His Human Life

God was manifest in the flesh through Jesus

Christ, but at what point in His life did God indwell the Son? The Bible unequivocally declares that the fulness of God was in Jesus from the moment when Jesus' human life began.

1. Matthew 1:23 says, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." He was "God with us" even at his birth.

2. The angels worshiped Him at His birth (Hebrews 1:6), Simeon recognized the infant as the Christ (Luke 2:26), Anna saw the babe as the redeemer of Israel (Luke 2:38), and the wise men worshiped the young child (Matthew 2:11).

3. Micah 5:2 ascribed deity to the Messiah at His birth in Bethlehem, not just after His life in Nazareth or His baptism in Jordan.

4. Luke 1:35 explains why Jesus was God at the beginning of His human life. The angel told Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Jesus was born of a virgin, His conception being effected by the Holy Ghost. Because of this ("therefore"), He was the Son of God. In other words, Jesus is the Son of God because God, and not a man, caused His conception. God was literally His Father. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. . ." (John 3:16). To beget means to father, sire, procreate, or cause. Jesus was begotten by God in the womb of the virgin Mary.

Isaiah 7:14 also links the virgin conception with the recognition that the Son thus born would be God.

In other words, at the moment of conception, God placed His divine nature in the seed of the woman. The child to be born received its life and the fatherly side of its nature from God at this time. From the mother's side it received the human nature of Mary; from the father's side (God, not Joseph) it received the nature of God. Jesus obtained His divine nature through the conception process; He did not become divine by some later act of God. The virgin birth of Jesus establishes His deity.

Some believe that Jesus received the fulness of God at some later time in His life, such as at His baptism. However, in light of the virgin birth and Luke 1:35 this cannot be so. Jesus received His nature of deity as well as the nature of humanity at conception. The descent of the Holy Ghost like a dove at the baptism of Jesus was not a baptism of the Holy Ghost; Jesus already had all the fulness of God within Him (Colossians 2:9). Rather, His baptism, among other things, occurred as a symbolic anointing for the beginning of His earthly ministry and as a confirmation to John the Baptist of His deity (John 1:32-34). (For more on the baptism of Jesus see Chapter VIII.)

The Mystery of Godliness

The fact that God became flesh is one of the most wonderful and yet one of the most incomprehensible things about God. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh. . ." (I Timothy 3:16). Jesus is like no other man that ever has been or will be. He has two natures; He is fully God and fully man. (See Chapter V.) Most problems in people's minds concerning the Godhead come from this great mystery. They cannot understand the dual nature of Christ and cannot correctly separate his two roles. They cannot comprehend how God could take on the form of a baby and live among men.

It is true that we cannot comprehend fully how the miraculous conception—the union of God and man—took place in the womb of Mary, but we can accept it by faith. In fact, if we do not believe that Jesus is come in the flesh we have an antichrist spirit (II John 7), but if we do accept this doctrine of Christ we will have both the Father and the Son (II John 9). Both Father and Son are revealed in Christ (John 10:30; 14:6-11).

The mystery of God in flesh was a great stumbling block to the Jews. They never could understand how Jesus, being a man, could also be God (John 10:33). Because He claimed to be God they rejected Him and sought to kill Him (John 5:18; 10:33).

Even today, many Jews cannot accept Jesus for this reason. In a conversation, an Orthodox Jewish Rabbi told us he could never accept Jesus as God.[4] He felt that since God is an omnipresent, invisible Spirit He can never be seen by man and cannot be visible in flesh. His reasoning reminded us of the Jews in Jesus' day. Like this rabbi, they tried to limit God by their own preconceived ideas of how God should act. Furthermore, they did not have a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures that proclaim the

deity of the Messiah.

While it is humanly difficult to understand how the infinite God could dwell in flesh, yet the Scriptures declare it to be so. We reminded the rabbi of God's appearance in the form of a man to Abraham in Genesis 18. He admitted this was a problem for him, but he tried to explain it in terms of an anthropomorphism or figurative language. Then we referred to other verses of Scripture such as Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, Jeremiah 23:6, and Micah 5:2 to show that the Messiah would be Jehovah God. The Rabbi had no answer except to say that our translations of these verses of Scripture were possibly incorrect. He promised to study them further.

There never has been a mystery as to "persons" in the Godhead. The Bible clearly states that there is only one God, and this is easy for all to understand. The only mystery about the Godhead is how God could come in flesh, how Jesus could be both God and man. But the truth of this mystery has been revealed to those who will believe. The mystery of Jesus Christ has been kept secret since the world began, but was revealed in the New Testament age (Romans 16:25-26; Colossians 1:25-27). A mystery in the New Testament is simply a plan of God that was not understood in the Old Testament but which *has* been made known to us. We "may understand. . .the mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:4-5).

We can know the mystery of God and the Father, which is Christ (Colossians 2:2; see also the *NIV* and

TAB). In fact, Paul explained this mystery by saying that in Jesus Christ dwells all the wisdom, knowledge, and fulness of God (Colossians 2:3, 9). The mystery of God *has* been revealed to us by God's Spirit (I Corinthians 2:7-10). This revelation comes to us through God's Word, which is illuminated by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:7-10). The light of Christ, who is the image of God, has shined in our hearts (II Corinthians 4:3-4). There is therefore no biblical mystery about the Godhead and certainly no mystery about the number of persons in the Godhead. The only mystery is Christ, and He has been revealed to us! The mystery of God and the mystery of Christ converge in the Incarnation. It is simply that the one God of Israel came to the earth in flesh. This mystery has been revealed and God's Word declares that it has been made known to us today.

Jesus is the Father

If there is only one God and that God is the Father (Malachi 2:10), and if Jesus is God, then it logically follows that Jesus is the Father. For those who somehow think that Jesus can be God and still not be the Father, we will offer additional biblical proof that Jesus is the Father. This will serve as more evidence that Jesus is God. Actually two verses of Scripture are sufficient to prove this point.

1. Isaiah 9:6 calls the Son the everlasting Father. Jesus is the Son prophesied about and there is only one Father (Malachi 2:10; Ephesians 4:6), so Jesus must be God the Father.

2. Colossians 2:9 proclaims that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus. The Godhead includes the role of Father, so the Father must dwell in Jesus.

3. In addition to these two verses, Jesus Himself taught that He was the Father. Once, when Jesus was talking about the Father, the Pharisees asked, "Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also" (John 8:19). Jesus went on to say, "I said therefore unto you, if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

We should note that *he* in the verse is in italics, which indicates that it is not in the original Greek, being added by the translators. Jesus was really identifying Himself with the "I AM" of Exodus 3:14. The Jews, who did not understand His meaning, asked, "Who art thou?" Jesus answered, "Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning" (John 8:25). However, "they understood not that he spake to them of the Father" (John 8:27). In other words, Jesus tried to tell them that He was the Father and the I AM, and that if they did not accept Him as God they would die in their sins.

4. In another place Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). Some try to say that He was one *with* the Father much as a husband and wife are one or as two men can be one in agreement. This interpretation attempts to weaken the force of the assertion Jesus made. However, other verses fully support that Jesus was not only the Son in His humanity but also the Father in His deity.

5. For example, Jesus stated in John 12:45, "And he

that seeth me seeth him that sent me." In other words, if a person sees Jesus as to His deity, he sees the Father.

6. In John 14:7 Jesus told His disciples, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." Upon hearing this statement, Philip requested, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John 14:8). In other words, he asked that Jesus show them the Father and then they would be satisfied. Jesus' answer was, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14:9-11). This statement goes far beyond a relationship of agreement; it can be viewed as nothing less that the claim of Christ to be the Father manifested in flesh. Like many people today, Philip had not comprehended that the Father is an invisible Spirit and that the only way a person could ever see Him would be through the person of Jesus Christ.

7. Jesus said, "The Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:38).

8. Jesus promised to be the Father of all overcomers (Revelation 21:6-7).

9. In John 14:18 Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." The Greek word translated "comfortless" is *orphanos,* which *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* defines as "bereaved

('orphans'), i.e. parentless." Jesus was saying, "I will not leave you as orphans" (*NIV* and *TAB*), or "I will not leave you fatherless: I will come to you." Jesus, speaking as the Father, promised that He would not leave His disciples fatherless.

Below are some comparisons which provide additional proof that Jesus is the Father.

10. Jesus prophesied that He would resurrect His own body from the dead in three days (John 2:19-21), yet Peter preached that God raised up Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24).

11. Jesus said He would send the Comforter to us (John 16:7), but He also said the Father would send the Comforter (John 14:26).

12. The Father alone can draw men to God (John 6:44), yet Jesus said He would draw all men (John 12:32).

13. Jesus will raise up all believers at the last day (John 6:40), yet God the Father quickens (gives life to) the dead and will raise us up (Romans 4:17; I Corinthians 6:14).

14. Jesus promised to answer the believer's prayer (John 14:14), yet He said the Father would answer prayer (John 16:23).

15. Christ is our sanctifier (Ephesians 5:26), yet the Father sanctifies us (Jude 1).

16. First John 3:1, 5 states that the Father loved us and was manifested to take away our sins, yet we know it was Christ who was manifested in the world to take away sin (John 1:29-31).

We can easily understand all of this if we realize that Jesus has a dual nature. He is both Spirit and flesh, God and man, Father and Son. On His human side He is the Son of man; on His divine side He is the Son of God and is the Father dwelling in flesh. (See Chapter V for more on the Son and Chapter VI for more on Father, Son, and Spirit.)

Jesus is Jehovah

The verses of Scripture demonstrating that Jesus is the Father do not exhaust our proof that Jesus is the one God. Below are twelve verses of Scripture specifically proving that Jesus is Jehovah--the one God of the Old Testament.

1. Isaiah 40:3 prophesied that a voice in the wilderness would cry, "Prepare ye the way of the LORD" (Jehovah); Matthew 3:3 says John the Baptist is the fulfillment of this prophecy. Of course, we know that John prepared the way of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since the name Jehovah was the sacred name for the one God, the Bible would not apply it to anyone other than the Holy One of Israel; here it is applied to Jesus.

2. Malachi 3:1 says, "The LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant." This was fulfilled by Jesus, whether the literal Temple or the temple of Jesus' body is meant (John 2:21).

3. Jeremiah 23:5-6 speaks of a righteous Branch from David—a clear reference to the Messiah—and names Him "The LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (See also Jeremiah 33:15-16.) In other words, Jesus is "Jehovah Our Righteousness."

4. Isaiah says, speaking of Jehovah, "His arm brought salvation" (Isaiah 59:16), and "his arm shall rule for him" (Isaiah 40:10). Isaiah 53:1-2 describes the Messiah as the revelation of the arm of the LORD. Therefore, Jesus the Savior is not another God, but an extension of Jehovah in human flesh to bring salvation to the world.

5. Isaiah prophesied that the glory of the LORD would be revealed to all flesh (Isaiah 40:5). Since Jehovah said He would not give His glory to another (Isaiah 42:8; 48:11), we know He could only fulfill this prophecy by revealing Himself. Indeed, we find in the New Testament that Jesus had the glory of the Father (John 1:14; 17:5). He is the Lord of glory (I Corinthians 2:8). When Jesus comes again, He will come in the glory of the Father (Matthew 16:27; Mark 8:38). Since Jesus has Jehovah's glory, He must be Jehovah.

6. Jehovah said, "Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I" (Isaiah 52:6). Yet we know that Jesus is the One that declared the Father, manifested the Father's name, and declared the Father's name (John 1:18; 17:6; 17:26). Jesus declared the LORD's name (Psalm 22:22; Hebrews 2:12). Thus, He must be Jehovah.

7. The LORD said, "That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Isaiah 45:23). Paul quoted this verse of Scripture to prove that all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10-11). Paul also wrote, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Philippians 2:10).

8. Zechariah offers convincing proof that Jesus is

Jehovah. In the passage beginning with Zechariah 11:4, "the LORD my God" said, "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." In Zechariah 12:10 Jehovah stated, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." Of course, it was Jesus who was sold for thirty pieces of silver and who was pierced (Matthew 26:14-16; John 19:34). Zechariah 12:8 says with reference to the Messiah, "the house of David shall be as God." Zechariah also wrote, "The LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" and describes Him battling against many nations and stepping foot on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3-5). Of course, we know Jesus is the One coming back to the Mount of Olives as King of kings and Lord of lords to war against the nations (Acts 1:9-12; I Timothy 6:14-16; Revelation 19:11-16).

9. When Paul, the educated Jew, the Pharisee of Pharisees, the fanatic persecutor of Christianity, was stricken on the road to Damascus by a blinding light from God, he asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" As a Jew, he knew there was only one God and Lord, and he was asking, "Who are you, Jehovah?" The Lord answered, "I am Jesus" (Acts 9:5).

10. Although Moses dealt with Jehovah God, Hebrews 11:26 says that Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. So Moses' God was Jesus Christ.

11. Psalm 68:18 depicts a scene in which Jehovah ascends on high and leads captivity captive, yet we know Jesus ascended and led captivity captive. In fact Ephesians 4:7-10 applies this prophecy to Jesus.

12. Revelation 22:6 says, "the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel" to John, but verse 16 says, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you."

There are yet many more passages of Scripture identifying Jesus with the one Jehovah God. Below is a list of verses that describe Jehovah in certain ways paired with verses that describe Jesus in the same ways. Thus, these verses of Scripture all prove that Jesus is Jehovah.

Jesus is Jehovah (I)

Jehovah		Jesus	
Title	**Scripture**	**Title**	**Scripture**
1. Almighty	Genesis 17:1	Almighty	Revelation 1:8
2. I AM	Exodus 3:14-16	I am	John 8:58
3. Rock	Psalm 18:2; 28:1	Rock	I Corinthians 10:4
4. Horn of Salvation	Psalm 18:2	Horn of Salvation	Luke 1:69
5. Shepherd	Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:10-11	Good Shepherd, Great Shepherd, Chief Shepherd	John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 5:4
6. King of Glory	Psalm 24:7-10	Lord of Glory	I Corinthians 2:8
7. Light	Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 60:19	Light	John 1:4-9; John 8:12; Revelation 21:23
8. Salvation	Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 12:2	Only Salvation	Acts 4:10-12
9. Lord of lords	Psalm 136:3	Lord of lords	Revelation 19:16
10. Holy One	Isaiah 12:6	Holy One	Acts 2:27

11. Lawgiver	Isaiah 33:22	Testator of the First Testament (the Law)	Hebrews 9:14-17
12. Judge	Isaiah 33:22	Judge	Micah 5:1; Acts 10:42
13. First and Last	Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12	Alpha and Omega, Beginning and Ending, First and Last	Revelation 1:8; 22:13
14. Only Savior	Isaiah 43:11; 45:21; 60:16	Savior	Titus 2:13; 3:6
15. Giver of Spiritual Water	Isaiah 44:3; 55:1	Giver of Living Water	John 4:10-14; 7:38-39
16. King of Israel	Isaiah 44:6	King of Israel, King of kings	John 1:49; Revelation 19:16
17. Only Creator	Isaiah 44:24; 45:8; 48:13	Creator of Everything	John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:10
18. Only Just God	Isaiah 45:21	Just One	Acts 7:52
19. Redeemer	Isaiah 54:5; 60:16	Redeemer	Galatians 3:13; Revelation 5:9

Jesus is Jehovah (II)

Name	Jesus is our:	Scripture
1. Jehovah-jireh (provider)	Provider (of the sacrifice)	Hebrews 10:10-12
2. Jehovah-rapha (healer)	Healer	James 5:14-15
3. Jehovah-nissi (banner, victory)	Victory	I Corinthians 15:57
4. Jehovah-m'kaddesh (sanctifier)	Sanctifier	Ephesians 5:26
5. Jehovah-shalom (peace)	Peace	John 14:27
6. Jehovah-sabaoth (Lord of hosts)	Lord of Hosts	James 5:4-7
7. Jehovah-elyon (most high)	Most High	Luke 1:32, 76, 78
8. Jehovah-raah (shepherd)	Shepherd	John 10:11
9. Jehovah-hoseenu (maker)	Maker	John 1:3
10. Jehovah-tsidkenu (righteousness)	Righteousness	I Corinthians 1:30
11. Jehovah-shammah (present)	Ever Present One	Matthew 28:20

The above lists are not exhaustive, but they are more than adequate to prove that Jesus is Jehovah. There is only one Jehovah (Deuteronomy 6:4), so this means Jesus is the one God of the Old Testament.

The Jews Understood That Jesus Claimed to be God

The Jews did not understand how God could come in flesh. They did not understand Jesus on one occasion when He told them He was the Father (John 8:19-27). However, on many other occasions they did understand His claim to be God. Once when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath and credited the work to His Father, the Jews sought to kill Him—not only because He had broken the Sabbath but because He said God was His Father, making Himself equal with God (John 5:17-18). Another time Jesus said Abraham rejoiced to see His day. When the Jews asked how this could be, Jesus replied, "Before Abraham was, I am." The Jews immediately recognized that He claimed to be I AM—the name by which Jehovah had identified Himself in Exodus 3:14—so they took up stones to kill Him for blasphemy (John 8:56-59).

When Jesus said, "I and my Father are one," the Jews sought to stone him for blasphemy, because He being a man made Himself God the Father (John 10:30-33). They sought to kill Him when He said the Father was in Him, again because He was claiming to be the Father (John 10:38-39).

When Jesus forgave a palsied man of His sins, the Jews thought He had blasphemed because they knew that only God could forgive sin (Isaiah 43:25). Jesus, knowing their thoughts, healed the man; thereby showing His divine power and proving His deity (Luke 5:20-26). The Jews were right in believing that there was one God, in believing that only God could forgive sin, and in understanding that Jesus claimed to be the one God (the Father and Jehovah). They were wrong only because they refused to believe Jesus' claim.

It is amazing that some people today not only reject the Lord's assertion of His true identity, but even fail to realize what He did assert. Even the Jewish opponents of Jesus realized that Jesus claimed to be God, the Father, and Jehovah, but some today cannot see what the Scriptures so plainly declare.

Jesus is the One on the Throne

There is one throne in heaven and One who sits

upon it. John described this in Revelation 4:2: "And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne." Without doubt this One is God because the twenty-four elders around the throne address Him as "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8). When we compare this to Revelation 1:5-18, we discover a remarkable similarity in the description of Jesus and the One sitting on the throne. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). Verses 5-7 make clear that Jesus is the One speaking in verse 8. Moreover, Jesus is clearly the subject of Revelation 1:11-18. In verse 11, Jesus identified Himself as the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. In verses 17-18 Jesus said, "I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." From the first chapter of Revelation, therefore, we find that Jesus is the Lord, the Almighty, and the One who is, was, and is to come. Since the same descriptive terms and titles apply to Jesus and to the One sitting on the throne, it is apparent that the One on the throne is none other than Jesus Christ.

There is additional support for this conclusion. Revelation 4:11 tells us the One on the throne is the Creator, and we know Jesus is the Creator (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Furthermore, the One on the throne is worthy to receive glory, honor, and power (Revelation 4:11); we read that the Lamb that was slain (Jesus) is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing (Revelation 5:12). Revelation 20:11-12 tells us the One on the throne is the Judge, and we know Jesus is the Judge of all (John 5:22, 27; Romans 2:16; 14:10-11). We conclude that Jesus must be the One on the throne in Revelation 4.

Revelation 22:3-4 speaks of the throne of God and of the Lamb. These verses speak of one throne, one face, and one name. Therefore, God and the Lamb must be one Being who has one face and one name and who sits on one throne. The only person who is both God and the Lamb is Jesus Christ. (For discussion of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 see Chapter VII. For discussion of the Lamb in Revelation 5 see Chapter IX.) In short, the Book of Revelation tells us that when we get to heaven we will see Jesus alone on the throne. Jesus is the only visible manifestation of God we will ever see in heaven.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Book of Revelation contains many other powerful statements concerning the deity of Jesus. God's purpose in having John to write the book was to reveal or unveil Jesus Christ, not merely to reveal future events. In fact, all of John's writings strongly emphasize the oneness of God, the deity of Christ, and the dual nature of Christ. John wrote the Gospel of John so that we would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31). Accepting Jesus as the Son of God means accepting Him as God, because the title "Son of God" simply means God manifested in the flesh. (See Chapter V for further discussion.) John identified Jesus as God, the Word, the Father, and Jehovah (the I am). All of John's writings elevate the deity of Jesus; the Book of Revelation is no exception.

Revelation 1:1 tells us the book is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Greek for revelation is *apokalupsis,* from which we get the word *apocalypse.* It literally means an unveiling or an uncovering. Certainly the book is a prophecy of things to come, but one of the main reasons for this prophecy is to reveal Christ—to show who He really is. The serious Bible student should seek to understand the predictions in the book; but, more importantly, he should seek to understand the reason for these predictions. He should seek to understand the revealing of Jesus Christ in these future events.

The Book of Revelation presents Jesus both in His humanity and in His deity. He is the Lamb slain for our sins but He is also the Almighty God on the throne. Below is a list of some of the ways in which the book presents Christ.

Jesus in the Book of Revelation

Title	Comment	Scripture in Revelation
1. Faithful witness	Prophet and apostle	1:5
2. First-begotten of the dead		1:5
3. Prince of kings		1:5
4. Alpha and Omega		1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13

5. Beginning and Ending		1:8; 21:6; 22:13
6. One which is, was, is to come		1:8; 4:8
7. The Almighty		1:8; 4:8
8. Son of man	Same as Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9	1:13
9. First and last		1:17; 22:13
10. He that liveth, was death, is alive for evermore		1:18
11. Possessor of the seven Spirits		3:1; 5:6
12. One on the throne		4:2
13. God		4:8; 21:7
14. Creator		4:11
15. Lion of tribe of Judah	Humanity	5:5
16. Root of David	David's creator	5:5; 22:16
17. Lamb	Sacrifice for sin	5:6
18. Redeemer		5:9
19. Faithful		19:11
20. True		19:11
21. The Word of God		19:13
22. King of kings		19:16
23. Lord of lords		19:16
24. Offspring of David	Humanity	22:16
25. Bright and morning star		22:16

Each of these titles and roles is a beautiful revelation of Jesus. Together, they present a portrait of One who came in flesh, died, and rose again but also One who is the everlasting Lord God Almighty.

The last chapter of Revelation describes God and the Lamb in the singular (Revelation 22:3-4) and identifies the Lord God of the holy prophets as Jesus

(Revelation 22:6, 16). These references tell us that Jesus is the God of eternity and that He will appear with His glorified human body (the Lamb) throughout eternity. God's glory will be the light for the New Jerusalem as it shines through the glorified body of Jesus (Revelation 21:23). These closing chapters of the Book of Revelation describes how God will reveal (unveil) Himself in all His glory to everyone forever. They tell us that Jesus is the everlasting God and that Jesus will reveal Himself as God throughout eternity. Therefore, the book is indeed the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Has All the Attributes and Prerogatives of God

If any more proof is needed to demonstrate that Jesus is God, we can compare the attributes of Jesus with the attributes of God. In doing so we find that Jesus possesses all the attributes and prerogatives of God, particularly those that can belong only to God. In His humanity, Jesus is visible, confined to a physical body, weak, imperfect in power, and so on. In His divine nature, however, Jesus is a Spirit; for Romans 8:9 speaks of the Spirit of Christ. In His divinity, Jesus was and is omnipresent. For example, in John 3:13 Jesus referred to "the Son of man which is in heaven" even though He was still on earth. His omnipresence explains why He could say in the present tense while on earth, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). In other words, while the fulness of God's character was located in the human body of

Jesus, the omnipresent Spirit of Jesus could not be so confined. While Jesus walked this earth as a man, His Spirit was still everywhere at the same time.

Jesus is also omniscient; for He could read thoughts (Mark 2:6-12). He knew Nathanael before He met him (John 1:47-50). He knows all things (John 21:17), and all wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him (Colossians 2:3).

Jesus is omnipotent; He has all power, is the head of all principality and power, and is the Almighty (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 2:10; Revelation 1:8).

Jesus is immutable and unchanging (Hebrews 13:8). He is also eternal and immortal (Hebrews 1:8-12; Revelation 1:8, 18).

Only God should receive worship (Exodus 20:1-5; 34:14), yet Jesus received worship on many occasions and will receive worship from all creation (Luke 24:52; Philippians 2:10; Hebrews 1:6). Only God can forgive sin (Isaiah 43:25), yet Jesus has power to forgive sin (Mark 2:5). God receives the spirits of men (Ecclesiastes 12:7), yet Jesus received the spirit of Stephen (Acts 7:59). God is the preparer of heaven (Hebrews 11:10), yet Jesus is the preparer of heaven (John 14:3). Therefore, we find that Jesus has all the attributes and prerogatives that belong to God alone.

Moreover, Jesus displays all the other characteristics God has. For example, while on earth Jesus displayed godly emotions such as joy, compassion, and sorrow (Luke 10:21; Mark 6:34; John 11:35). The Bible also testifies that He has the moral attributes of God. Below is a list of some moral attributes of Jesus which correspond to those of God.

Jesus Has the Moral Nature of God

1. love	Ephesians 5:25
2. light	John 1:3-9
3. holiness	Luke 1:35
4. mercy	Hebrews 2:17
5. gentleness	II Corinthians 10:1
6. righteousness	II Timothy 4:8
7. goodness	Matthew 19:16
8. perfection	Ephesians 4:13
9. justice	Acts 3:14
10. faithfulness	Revelation 19:11
11. truth	John 14:6
12. grace	John 1:16-17

Conclusion

Jesus is everything that the Bible describes God to be. He has all the attributes, prerogatives, and characteristics of God Himself. To put it simply, everything that God is Jesus is. Jesus is the one God. There is no better way to sum it all up than to say with the inspired Apostle Paul, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:9-10).

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

[1] John Miller, *Is God a Trinity?* (1922; rpt. Hazelwood, Mo.: Word Aflame Press, 1975), p. 85.

[2] Flanders and Cresson, p. 511.

[3] Otto Heick, *A History of Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), I, 31-32, 59-63.

[4] November, 1980, Jerusalem, Israel.

5

THE SON OF GOD

> *"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4).*

Chapter IV affirmed that Jesus is God. In this chapter we discuss the other side of Christ's dual nature—His humanity—and the biblical concept of the Son of God.

The Meaning of *Jesus* and *Christ*

Before getting into the heart of this chapter, let us briefly explain the meaning of the two words, *Jesus* and *Christ*. *Jesus* is the Greek version of the Hebrew word *Jehoshua*, which means Jehovah-Savior or Jehovah is Salvation. It is the name God chose for His Son—the name through which God has revealed Himself in the New Testament. It is a name the Son received by inheritance (Hebrews 1:4). *Christ* is the

Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Messiah*; both words mean "the anointed one." Strictly speaking, *Christ* is a title and not a name. However, in the epistles and in ordinary usage today, *Christ* is often used as simply another name for Jesus, since Jesus is the Christ. In many cases, Jesus and Christ are just two names used interchangeably to refer to the same person, with no distinction in meaning being intended.

The Dual Nature of Christ

From the Bible we see that Jesus Christ had two distinct natures in a way that no other human being has ever had. One nature is human or fleshly; the other nature is divine or Spirit. Jesus was both fully man and fully God. The name *Jesus* refers to the eternal Spirit of God (the Father) dwelling in the flesh. We can use the name *Jesus* to describe either one of His two natures or both. For example, when we say Jesus died on the cross, we mean His flesh died on the cross. When we say Jesus lives in our hearts, we mean His Spirit is there.

Below is a comparative list that will illustrate what we mean when we say Jesus had two natures or a dual nature.

The Dual Nature of Jesus Christ

As a Man, Jesus:	But as God, He:
1. Was born a baby (Luke 2:7)	Existed from eternity (Micah 5:2; John 1:1-2)
2. Grew mentally, physically, spiritually, socially (Luke 2:52)	Never changes (Hebrews 13:8)
3. Was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:2)	Cast out devils (Matthew 12:28)
4. Hungered (Matthew 4:2)	Was the Bread of Life (John 6:35) and miraculously fed multitudes (Mark 6:38-44, 52)
5. Thirsted (John 19:28)	Gave living water (John 4:14)
6. Grew weary (John 4:6)	Gave rest (Matthew 11:28)
7. Slept in a storm (Mark 4:38)	Calmed the storm (Mark 4:39-41)
8. Prayed (Luke 22:41)	Answered prayer (John 14:14)
9. Was scourged and beaten (John 19:1-3)	Healed the sick (Matthew 8:16-17; I Peter 2:24)
10. Died (Mark 15:37)	Raised His own body from the dead (John 2:19-21; 20:9)
11. Was a sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:10-12)	Forgave sin (Mark 2:5-7)
12. Did not know all things (Mark 13:32)	Knew all things (John 21:17)
13. Had no power (John 5:30)	Had all power (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 2:10)
14. Was inferior to God (John 14:28)	Was equal to God—was God (John 5:18)
15. Was a servant (Philippians 2:7-8)	Was King of kings (Revelation 19:16)

We can resolve most questions about the Godhead if we properly understand the dual nature of Jesus. When we read a statement about Jesus we must determine if it describes Jesus as a man or as God. Moreover, whenever Jesus speaks in Scripture we must determine whether He is speaking as man or as God. Whenever we see a description of two natures with respect to Jesus, we should not think of two persons in the Godhead or of two Gods, but we should think of Spirit and flesh.

Sometimes it is easy to get confused when the Bible describes Jesus in these two different roles, especially when it describes Him acting in both roles in the same story. For example, He could sleep one minute and calm the storm the next minute. He could speak as man one moment and then as God the next moment. However, we must always remember that Jesus is fully God and not merely an anointed man. At the same time, He was fully man, not just an appearance of man. He had a dual nature unlike anything we have, and we cannot adequately compare our existence or experience to His. What would seem strange or impossible if applied to a mere human becomes understandable when viewed in the context of One who is both fully God and fully man at the same time.

Historical Doctrines of Christ

The dual nature of Christ has been viewed in many different ways throughout church history. We will discuss these various views in a brief and general way. For the sake of reference and further study, we have included in parentheses various historical names associated with these beliefs. For more on these terms and doctrines, see any good work on the history of dogma, especially the history of trinitarianism and Christology.

Some believe that Jesus was only a man who was greatly anointed and used by the Spirit (Ebionitism; see also Unitarianism). This erroneous view completely ignores His Spirit nature. Others have said that Jesus was a spirit being only (Docetism—a doctrine in Gnosticism). This view ignores His human nature. John wrote that those who deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh are not of God but have an antichrist spirit (I John 4:2-3).

Even among those who believe in the dual nature of Jesus Christ, there are many erroneous beliefs. Some have tried to distinguish between Jesus and Christ, saying that Christ was a divine being who temporarily dwelt in Jesus beginning at his baptism, but withdrew from the man Jesus just before death (Cerinthianism—a doctrine in Gnosticism). In a similar vein, some say Jesus was a man who became God only at some point in His adult life—such as at His baptism—as a result of an adoptive act by God (Dynamic Monarchianism, Adoptionism). In other words, this view contends that Jesus was a human who was eventually deified. Others regard Jesus as a created deity, a deity like the Father but inferior to the Father in deity, or a demigod (Arianism). Then, some believe that Jesus is of the same essence as the Father, yet not the Father but subordinate to the Father in deity (Subordinationism).

We refuted these false theories in Chapter IV by referring to the Scriptures. There we noted that Jesus is fully God (as demonstrated by Colossians 2:9) and that Jesus was fully God from the beginning of His human existence (as demonstrated by the Virgin Birth and Luke 1:35).

The Spirit inspired John and Paul to refute many of these erroneous doctrines, particularly the Gnostic beliefs that Christ was a spirit being only and that Christ was a being inferior to the Supreme God. Among other things, Gnostics believed that all matter was evil. Therefore, they reasoned, Christ as a divine spirit could not have had a real human body. Since they held that the Supreme God was so transcendent and holy that He could not make direct contact with the evil world of matter, they taught that from God came a series of emanations one of whom was the Spirit-being Christ, who came to this world. Of course, the Book of Colossians refutes these doctrines and establishes that Jesus is the Almighty God in the flesh.

While the Bible is clear in emphasizing both the full deity and full humanity of Jesus, it does not describe in detail how these two natures are united in the one person of Jesus Christ. This, too, has been the subject of much speculation and debate. Perhaps there is room for divergent views on this issue since the Bible does not treat it directly. Indeed, if there is to be any mystery about the Godhead, it will be in determining precisely how God manifested Himself in flesh. (See I Timothy 3:16.) The study of the nature or natures of Christ is called Christology.

One way to explain the human and divine in Christ is to say He was God living in a human house. In other words, He had two distinct natures unified not in substance but only in purpose, action and appearance (Nestorianism). This view implies that Christ is divided into two persons, and that the human

person could have existed in the absence of the divine. The Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. condemned Nestorius' view as heresy.

Many theologians, however, including Martin Luther have thought that Nestorius, the chief exponent of this doctrine, did not really believe in such a drastic separation but that opponents distorted and misrepresented his views. Apparently, he denied that he divided Christ into two persons. The main concern Nestorius expressed was this: he wanted to so differentiate between the two natures of Christ that no one could call Mary the mother of God, which was a popular practice in his day.

Another Christological view holds that the human and divine aspects of Christ were so intermingled that there was really only one dominant nature, and it was divine (Monophysitism). A similar belief is that Jesus did not have two wills, but only a divine-human will (Monothelitism). Others believe that Jesus had an incomplete human nature (Apollinarianism); that is, Jesus had a human body and soul but instead of a human spirit He had only the Spirit of God dwelling in Him. Other ways to state this belief are that Jesus was a human body animated solely by the Spirit of God, or that Jesus did not have a human mind but only the divine mind (the Logos).

On the one hand we have a view that emphasizes the separation between the two natures of Christ. On the other hand, we have several views that describe one totally dominant, divine nature, a totally unified nature, or an incomplete human nature.

Jesus Had a Complete, But Sinless, Human Nature

The truth may lie somewhere in between these historical views expressed by various theologians. That Jesus had a complete human nature and complete divine nature at the same time is the teaching of Scripture, but we cannot separate these two natures in His earthly life. It is apparent that Jesus had a human will, mind, spirit, soul, and body, but it is equally apparent that He had the fulness of the Godhead resident in that body. From our finite view, His human spirit and His divine Spirit were inseparable.

The divine Spirit could be separated from the human body by death, but His humanity was more than a human body—the shell of a human—with God inside. He was human in body, soul, and spirit with the fulness of the Spirit of God dwelling in that body, soul, and spirit. Jesus differed from an ordinary human (who can be filled with the Spirit of God) in that He had all of God's nature within Him. He possessed the unlimited power, authority and character of God. Furthermore, in contrast to a born-again, Spirit-filled human, the Spirit of God was inextricably and inseparably joined with the humanity of Jesus. Without the Spirit of God there would have been only a lifeless human that would not have been Jesus Christ. Only in these terms can we describe and distinguish the two natures in Jesus; we know that He acted and spoke from one role or the other, but we also know that the two natures were not actually separated in Him. With our finite minds, we can make only a distinction and

not a separation in the two natures that blended perfectly in Him.

Although Jesus had a complete human nature, He did not have the sinful nature of fallen humanity. If He would have had a sinful nature, He would have sinned. However, we know He neither had a sinful nature nor did He commit sinful acts. He was without sin, He did not sin, and sin was not in Him (Hebrews 4:15; I Peter 2:22; I John 3:5). Since He did not have a human father, He did not inherit a sinful nature from fallen Adam. Instead, He came as the second Adam, with an innocent nature like Adam had in the beginning (Romans 5:12-21; I Corinthians 15:45-49). Jesus had a complete, but sinless, human nature.

The Bible does indicate that Jesus had a human will as well as the divine will. He prayed to the Father, saying, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). John 6:38 shows the existence of two wills: He came not to do His own will (human will), but to do the Father's will (the divine will).

That Jesus had a human spirit seems evident when He spoke on the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Although it is difficult to distinguish between the divine and human natures of His spirit, some references seemingly focus upon the human aspect. For example, "he sighed deeply in his spirit" (Mark 8:12), "waxed strong in spirit" (Luke 2:40), "rejoiced in spirit" (Luke 10:21), "groaned in the spirit" (John 11:33), and "was troubled in spirit" (John 13:21).

Jesus had a soul, for He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38; see

Mark 14:34) and "Now is my soul troubled" (John 12:27). Upon His death, His soul visited hell (Greek *hades*—the grave or the underworld of departed souls), just as all souls did before Calvary (Acts 2:27). The difference was that the Spirit of God in Jesus would not let His soul stay in hell (Acts 2:27, 31); instead He conquered hell (again, *hades*) and death (Revelation 1:18).

The soul of Jesus had to be inseparably bound to the divine Spirit of Jesus. Otherwise, Jesus would have lived as a man, even with the eternal Spirit taken away from Him. This did not and could not have happened, since Jesus is God made known in the flesh. We know that Jesus as God never changes (Hebrews 13:8).

If we do not accept the fact that Jesus was fully human, then the scriptural references to His temptations lose meaning (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 2:16-18; 4:14-16). So does the description of His struggle and agony in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-44). Two passages in Hebrews point out that since Jesus was tempted as we are, He qualifies as our High Priest, understands us perfectly, and helps us in our infirmities: "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Hebrews 2:17); "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Hebrews 5:7-8 says, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." These verses do not present a picture of someone unaffected by the emotions of fears and doubts. Rather, they describe someone who possessed these human weaknesses; He had to subdue the human will and submit to the eternal Spirit.

The humanity of Christ prayed, cried, learned obedience, and suffered. The divine nature was in control and God was faithful to His own plan, but the human nature had to obtain help from the Spirit and, had to learn obedience to the divine plan. Surely all these verses of Scripture show that Jesus was fully human—that He had every attribute of humanity except the sinful nature inherited from the Fall. If we deny the humanity of Jesus, we encounter a problem with the concept of redemption and atonement. Not being fully human, could His sacrifice be sufficient to redeem mankind? Could he really be a true substitute for us in death? Could He truly qualify as our kinsman redeemer?

Could Jesus Sin?

The assertion that Jesus was perfect in humanity leads to a question: Could Jesus sin? This is really a misleading and abstract question, since we know Jesus did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). The answer is more academic than practical, more speculative than bearing any real substance. In His humanity, Jesus was tempted by Satan, and He struggled with His will in Gethsemane. Although He did not have our depraved natures—He had the same innocent, sinless nature as Adam had originally—He had the same ability to go against God's will, as did Adam and Eve.

Certainly the divine part of Jesus could not sin and could not even be tempted to sin (James 1:13). The human part of Jesus, when viewed alone, theoretically had the capacity to sin. But this is only theoretical, and not actual. Viewed alone, it seems that the humanity of Christ had the capacity to choose sin. However, His human nature always willingly submitted to the divine nature, which could not sin. So, as a practical matter, Jesus Christ—viewed as the combination of humanity and divinity that He was—could not sin. The Spirit was always in control and Spirit-controlled humanity does not commit sin. (See I John 3:9 for an analogy.)

What if the humanity of Jesus had rebelled against the divine leadership? This is another totally theoretical question because it did not happen and as a practical matter it could not happen. This question does not take into account the foreknowledge and the power of God. Yet if one insists on an answer, we would say that if the humanity of Jesus had tried to sin (a foolish assumption), the divine Spirit of Jesus would have immediately separated Himself from the human body, leaving it lifeless. This lifeless body would not be Jesus Christ, so technically Christ could not have sinned, although the plan of God would have been thwarted temporarily.

Since Jesus as God could not sin, does this mean the temptations were meaningless? No. Since Jesus was also fully human He really was able to feel the struggle and pull of temptation. He overcame temptation, not as God in Himself, but as a human with all

the power of God available to Him. He now knows exactly by experience how we feel when we are tempted. Of course, He knew He would be victorious through the Spirit, but we can have the same assurance, power, and victory by relying on the same Spirit that was in Christ.

So, why did Satan tempt Jesus? Apparently, he did not know Jesus inevitably would be victorious and he did not understand at that time the full mystery of God in flesh. If he had, he never would have instigated the crucifixion. Perhaps he thought he had defeated God's plan by the crucifixion, but instead he just fulfilled it. It is also probable that the Spirit of God allowed Satan to tempt Jesus so that Jesus could feel temptation as we do. We are told that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1).

For those who think our position somehow detracts from the reality of Christ's temptations, consider this. We know Jesus did not have a sinful nature. We know He did not have the inclination and compulsion to sin that we have because of our fallen nature. Yet, this does not detract from the reality of what He experienced. He still felt the very struggle that we feel. Likewise, the fact that as God Jesus could not sin does not detract from the reality of His temptations. He still felt the same struggles and trials that we feel. On the other hand, if we say Jesus could sin we detract from His absolute deity, for we are indicating that somehow God can exist apart from Jesus and vice versa.

We conclude that the human nature of Jesus could be and was tempted. Since the divine nature was in control, however, Jesus could not and did not sin. If Jesus had an incomplete human nature, the reality and meaning of the temptations and the struggle in Gethsemane would be lessened. We believe He did have a complete human nature. He experienced exactly how man feels when he is tempted and when he struggles. The fact that Jesus knew He would overcome through the Spirit does not detract from the reality of the temptations.

The whole question of whether Jesus could sin is abstract, as we have already observed. Suffice it to say that Jesus' human nature was like ours in all points except in the matter of original sin. He was tempted in all things, as we are, and yet the Spirit of God was always in control. The most relevant fact for us is that He was tempted, yet He did not sin.

The Son in Biblical Terminology

We should consider the dual nature of Christ into the framework of biblical terminology. The term *Father* refers to God Himself—God in all His deity. When we speak of the eternal Spirit of God, we mean God Himself, the Father. God the Father, therefore, is a perfectly acceptable and biblical phrase to use for God (Titus 1:4). However, the Bible does not use the term "God the Son" even one time. It is not a correct term because the Son of God refers to the humanity of Jesus Christ. The Bible defines the Son of God as the child born of Mary, not as the eternal Spirit of God (Luke 1:35). Son of God may refer solely to the human

nature or it may refer to God manifested in flesh—that is, deity in the human nature.

Son of God never means the incorporeal Spirit alone, however. We can never use the term "Son" correctly apart from the humanity of Jesus Christ. The terms "Son of God," "Son of man," and "Son" are appropriate and biblical. However, the term "God the Son" is inappropriate because it equates the Son with deity alone, and therefore it is unscriptural.

The Son of God is not a separate person in the Godhead, but the physical expression of the one God. The Son is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:13-15) and "the express image of His [God's] person" (Hebrews 1:2-3). Just as a signature stamp leaves an exact likeness on paper, or just as a seal leaves an exact impression when pressed in wax, so the Son of God is the exact expression of the Spirit of God in flesh. Man could not see the invisible God, so God made an exact likeness of Himself in flesh, impressed His very nature in flesh, came Himself in flesh, so that man could see and know Him.

Many other verses of Scripture reveal that we can only use the term "Son of God" correctly when it includes the humanity of Jesus. For example, the Son was made of a woman (Galatians 4:4), the Son was begotten (John 3:16), the Son was born (Matthew 1:21-23; Luke 1:35), the Son did not know the hour of the Second Coming (Mark 13:32), the Son could do nothing of Himself (John 5:19), the Son came eating and drinking (Matthew 11:19), the Son suffered (Matthew 17:12), a person can blaspheme against the Son but not the Spirit and be forgiven (Luke 12:10), the Son was crucified (John 3:14; 12:30-34), and the Son died (Matthew 27:40-54; Romans 5:10). The death of Jesus is a particularly good example. His divine Spirit did not die, but His human body did. We cannot say that God died, so we cannot say "God the Son" died. On the other hand, we can say that the Son of God died because Son refers to humanity.

As stated above, "Son" does not always refer to the humanity alone but to the deity and humanity together as they exist in the one person of Christ. For example, the Son has power to forgive sin (Matthew 9:6), the Son was both in heaven and on earth at the same time (John 3:13), the Son ascended up into heaven (John 6:62), and the Son is coming again in glory to rule and judge (Matthew 25:31).

One note needs to be added to our discussion of the phrase "God the Son." In John 1:18 the *KJV* uses the phrase "the only begotten Son" and the *RSV* says "the only Son." However, the *NIV* says "God the only Son" and *TAB* says "the only unique Son, the only begotten God." These last two versions are based on variant readings in some Greek texts. We do not believe these variant readings are correct. If we could justify the use of the phrase "God the Son" at all, it would be by pointing out, as we have done, that "Son of God" can mean not only the humanity of Jesus but also the deity as it resides in the humanity. However, John 1:18 uses *Son* to refer to the humanity, for it says the Father (the deity of Jesus) is revealed through the Son. This verse of Scripture does not mean that God is revealed by God, but that God is revealed in flesh through the humanity of the Son.

Son of God

What is the significance of the title "Son of God"? It emphasizes the divine nature of Jesus and the fact of His virgin birth. He is the Son of God because He was conceived by the Spirit of God, making God literally His father (Luke 1:35). When Peter confessed that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God," he recognized the Messianic role and deity of Jesus (Matthew 16:16). The Jews understood what Jesus meant when He called Himself the Son of God and when He called God His Father, for they tried to kill Him for claiming to be God (John 5:18; 10:33). In short, the title "Son of God" recognizes the humanity while calling attention to the deity of Jesus. It means *God* has manifested Himself in flesh.

We should note that the angels are called sons of God (Job 38:7) because God created them directly. Similarly, Adam was the son of God by creation (Luke 3:38). The saints (members of God's church) are also sons of God or children of God because He has adopted us into that relationship (Romans 8:14-19). We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, having all the legal rights of sonship. However, Jesus is the Son of God in the sense that no other being is or can be, for Jesus is the only *begotten* Son of God (John 3:16). He is the only One ever conceived or begotten by the Spirit of God. Thus, His unique Sonship attests to His deity.

Son of Man

The term "Son of man" draws attention primarily to the humanity of Jesus; it alludes that He is the offspring of mankind. The Old Testament uses this phrase many times to refer to mankind. For example, the following verses of Scripture use it to mean mankind in general or any man without specific identification: Psalm 8:4, 146:3; Isaiah 51:12; Jeremiah 49:18. (Psalm 8:4 has an underlying meaning that refers prophetically to the Messiah, as shown by Hebrews 2:6-7.) The term "son of man" also refers many times to a specific man, especially in Ezekiel where it designates the prophet (Ezekiel 2:1, 3, 6, 8; Daniel 8:17). In a few verses of Scripture, it connotes a man to whom God has given sovereignty and power (Psalm 80:17; Daniel 7:13). This last meaning appears frequently in Jewish apocalyptic literature of the intertestamental period.[2]

Jesus applied the term "Son of man" to Himself many times. In most instances, He used it as a synonym for "I" or as a title emphasizing His humanity. In some instances, it connotes not only the mere fact of His humanity, but also the power and authority given to the Son by the eternal Spirit of God (Matthew 24:30; 25:31). In short, Jesus adopted the title with its connotations of power and world rulership, but applied it to Himself in all situations. The title serves to remind us that Jesus really was a man.

The Word

We discussed the concept of the Word in Chapter IV. However, we look again at this term to distinguish it in usage from the term *Son.* The Word or Logos can mean the plan or thought as it existed in the mind

of God. This thought was a predestined plan—an absolutely certain future event—and therefore it had a reality attached to it that no human thought could ever have. The Word can also mean the plan or thought of God as expressed in the flesh, that is in the Son. What is the difference, therefore, between the two terms, *Word* and *Son?* The Word had pre-existence and the Word was God (the Father), so we can use it without reference to humanity. However, the Son always refers to the Incarnation and we cannot use it in the absence of the human element. Except as a foreordained plan in the mind of God, the Son did not have pre-existence before the conception in the womb of Mary. The Son of God pre-existed in thought but not in substance. The Bible calls this foreordained plan the Word (John 1:1, 14).

Begotten Son Or Eternal Son?

John 3:16 calls Jesus the only begotten Son of God. However, many people use the phrase "eternal Son." Is this latter phrase correct? No. The Bible never uses it and it expresses a concept contradicted by Scripture. The word *begotten* is a form of the verb *beget,* which means "to procreate, to father, to sire." Thus *begotten* indicates a definite point in time—the point at which conception takes place. By definition, the begetter (father) always must come before the begotten (offspring). There must be a time when the begetter exists and the begotten is not yet in existence, and there must be a point in time when the act of begetting occurs. Otherwise the word *begotten* has no meaning. So, the very words *begotten* and *Son* each contradict the word *eternal* as applied to the Son of God.

We have already discussed that "Son of God" refers to the humanity of Jesus. Clearly the humanity of Jesus is not eternal but was born in Bethlehem. One can speak of eternality—past, present, and future—only with respect to God. Since "Son of God" refers to humanity or deity as manifest in humanity, the idea of an eternal Son is incomprehensible. The Son of God had a beginning.

The Beginning Of The Son

The Sonship—or the role of the Son—began with the child conceived in the womb of Mary. The Scriptures make this perfectly clear. Galatians 4:4 says, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The Son came in the fulness of time—not in eternity past. The Son was made of a woman—not begotten eternally. The Son was made under the law—not before the law. (See also Hebrews 7:28.) The term *begotten* refers to the conception of Jesus described in Matthew 1:18-20 and Luke 1:35. The Son of God was begotten when the Spirit of God miraculously caused conception to take place in the womb of Mary. This is evident from the very meaning of the word *begotten* and also from Luke 1:35, which explains that because the Holy Ghost would overshadow Mary, *therefore* her child would be the Son of God. We should notice the future tense in this verse: the child to be born "shall be called the Son of God."

Hebrews 1:5-6 also reveals that the begetting of the Son occurred at a specific point in time and that the Son had a beginning in time: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." The following points can be deducted from these verses: the Son was begotten on a specific day in time; there was a time when the Son did not exist; God prophesied about the Son's future existence ("will be"); and God brought the Son into the world sometime after the creation of the angels.

Other verses of Scripture emphasize that the Son was begotten on a certain day in time—"this day" (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33). All the Old Testament verses that mention the Son are clearly prophetic, looking forward to the day when the Son of God would be begotten (Psalm 2:7, 12; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6). (As discussed in Chapter II, Daniel 3:25 refers to an angel. Even if it describes a theophany of God, it could not mean the then nonexistent body of Jesus Christ.)

From all of these verses, it is easy to see that the Son is not eternal, but was begotten by God almost 2000 years ago. Many theologians who have not fully accepted the great truth of the oneness of God have still rejected the doctrine of the "eternal Son" as self-contradictory, unscriptural, and false. Examples are Tertullian (father of trinitarian doctrine in early church history), Adam Clarke (the well-known Bible commentator), and Finis Dake (trinity Pentecostal Bible annotator who is essentially tritheistic).

The Ending Of The Sonship

Not only did the Sonship have a beginning, but it will, in at least one sense, have an ending. This is evident from I Corinthians 15:23-28. In particular, verse 24 says, "Then cometh the end, when he [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. . . ." Verse 28 says, "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." This verse of Scripture is impossible to explain if one thinks of a "God the Son" who is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. But it is easily explained if we realize that "Son of God" refers to a specific role that God temporarily assumed for the purpose of redemption. When the reasons for the Sonship cease to exist, God (Jesus) will cease acting in His role as Son, and the Sonship will be submerged back into the greatness of God, who will return to His original role as Father, Creator, and Ruler of all. Ephesians 5:27 describes this same scene in different terms: "That he [Christ] might present it to himself a glorious church. . . ." Jesus will present the church to Himself! How can this be, in light of I Corinthians 15:24, which describes the Son presenting the kingdom to the Father? The answer is clear: Jesus in His role as Son, and as His final act as Son, will present the church to Himself in His role as God the Father.

We find another indication that the Sonship has an ending. In Acts 2:34-35, Peter quoted David in Psalm 110:1: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool." We should note the word *until*. This passage describes the dual nature of Christ, with the Spirit of God (the LORD) speaking prophetically to the human manifestation of Christ (the Lord). The right hand of God represents God's power and authority. Making foes a footstool means utterly defeating the enemy and making an open show of their defeat. In ancient times, the victor sometimes did this literally, placing his foot on his enemies' heads or necks (Joshua 10:24). So the prophecy in Psalm 110 is this: The Spirit of God will give all power and authority to the man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, *until* the Son has completely vanquished the enemies of sin and the devil. The Son will have all power *until* He does this. What happens to the Son after this? Does this mean an eternal person of a trinity will stop sitting on the right hand of God or lose all power? No. It simply means that the role of the Son as ruler will cease. God will use His role as Son—God manifest in flesh—to conquer Satan, thereby fulfilling Genesis 3:15 in which God said the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the devil. After that, God will no longer need the human role to rule.

After Satan is cast into the lake of fire and all sin is judged at the last judgment (Revelation 20), there will be no further need for the Son to exercise the throne of power. Jesus Christ will cease acting in His Sonship role and will be God forever.

Does this mean that God will cease using the resurrected and glorified body of Christ? We believe that Jesus will continue to use His glorified body throughout eternity. This is indicated by Revelation 22:3-4, which describes a visible God even after the last judgment and after the creation of the new heaven and earth: "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." Jesus is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 7:21), even though He will cease acting in His role as priest after the last judgment. The Lord's glorified human body is immortal just like ours will be (I John 3:2; I Corinthians 15:50-54). Although the glorified body of Christ will continue to exist, all the reasons for the reign of the Sonship will be gone and all the roles played by the Son will be over. Even the Son will be placed under subjection so that God may be all in all. It is in this sense that the Sonship will end.

The Purposes For The Son

Since the role of the Son of God is temporary and not eternal, why did God choose to reveal Himself through the Son? Why did He beget the Son? The primary purpose of the Son is to be our Savior. The work of salvation required many roles that only a human being could fulfill, including the roles of sacrifice, propitiation, substitute, kinsman-redeemer, reconciler, mediator, advocate, high priest, second Adam, and example. These terms overlap in many ways, but each represents an important aspect of the work of salvation that, according to the plan of God, could only be done by a human being.

According to God's plan, the shedding of blood was necessary for the remission of man's sins (Hebrews 9:22). The blood of animals could not take away man's sin because animals are inferior to man (Hebrews 10:4). No other human could purchase redemption for someone else because all had sinned and so deserved the penalty of death for themselves (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Only God was sinless, but He did not have flesh and blood. Therefore, God prepared a body for Himself (Hebrews 10:5), that He might live a sinless life in flesh and shed innocent blood to save mankind. He became flesh and blood so that He could through death defeat the devil and deliver mankind (Hebrews 2:14-15). In this way Christ is our propitiation—the means by which we obtain forgiveness, the satisfaction of God's justice, the appeasement of God's holy wrath (Romans 3:25). The sacrifice of Christ is the means by which God pardons our sin without compromising His righteousness. We are saved today through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—through the offering of the Son of God (Hebrews 10:10-20; John 3:16). Thus the Son is the sacrifice and propitiation for our sins.

When the Son of God became a sacrifice, He also became a substitute for us. He died in our place, bore our sins, and paid the penalty of death for our sins (Isaiah 53:5-6; I Peter 2:24). He was more than a martyr; He actually took our place. He tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). Of course, the only way Jesus could be our substitute and die in our place was by coming in flesh.

Christ's role as our kinsman-redeemer is also made possible by the Sonship. In the Old Testament, if a man sold his property or sold himself into slavery, a close relative had the right to buy back that man's property or freedom for him (Leviticus 25:25, 47-49). By coming in flesh, Jesus became our brother (Hebrews 2:11-12). Thus, He qualified Himself to be our kinsman-redeemer. The Bible describes Him as our redeemer (Romans 3:24; Revelation 5:9).

Through His humanity, Jesus Christ is able to mediate, that is, to go between man and God and represent man to God. As a mediator, Jesus reconciles man to God; He brings man back into fellowship with God (II Corinthians 5:18-19). The gap between a holy God and sinful man was bridged by the sinless man Jesus Christ: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5). We should notice how carefully Paul maintained the oneness of God in this verse. There is no distinction in God, but a distinction between God and the man Christ Jesus. There are *not* two personalities in God; the duality is in Jesus as God and Jesus as man. It is not God who mediates between God and man; nor is it "God the Son" who does so. Rather it is the *man* Jesus who mediates; only a sinless man could approach a holy God on behalf of mankind.

Closely associated with Christ's role as mediator is His role as high priest (Hebrews 2:16-18; 4:14-16). In His humanity, Jesus was tempted just as we are; it is because of His human experience that He can help us as a compassionate high priest. He entered the heavenly tabernacle, went behind the veil into the most holy place, and there offered His own blood (Hebrews 6:19; 9:11-12). Through His sacrifice and atonement, we have direct access to the throne of God (Hebrews 4:16; 6:20). The Son is our high priest through whom we can boldly approach God.

Similarly, the Sonship allows Christ to be our advocate, one called alongside to help (I John 2:1). If we sin even after conversion, we have someone who will plead our case for mercy before God. Again, it is the role of the Son that accomplished this, for when we confess our sins the blood of Christ is applied to those sins, making His advocacy for us successful.

Through His humanity Jesus is the second Adam (I Corinthians 15:45-47). He came to conquer and condemn sin *in the flesh* and to defeat death itself (Romans 8:3; I Corinthians 15:55-57). He came as a man so that He could replace Adam as the representative of the human race. By so doing, He reversed all the consequences of Adam's fall for those who believe on Him (Romans 5:12-21). Everything that mankind lost because of Adam's sin, Jesus won it back as the second Adam, the new representative of the human race.

There is another aspect of Christ's victory over sin in the flesh. Not only did Jesus come in the flesh to die, but He also came to give us an example of an overcoming life so that we could follow in His footsteps (I Peter 2:21). He showed us how to live victoriously over sin in the flesh. He became the Word of God enacted in flesh (John 1:1). He became the living Word so that we could understand clearly what

God wanted us to be like. Of course, He also gives us power to follow His example. Just as we are reconciled by His death, we are saved by His life (Romans 5:10). His Spirit gives us the power to live the righteous life that He wants us to live (Acts 1:8; Romans 8:4). The Son not only represents man to God, but He also represents God to man. He is an apostle, one chosen by God and sent by God for a specific purpose (Hebrews 3:1). He is a prophet, representing God to man and revealing God's Word to man (Acts 3:20-23; Hebrews 1:1-2). His humanity is crucial in this regard, because God used the humanity of the Son to reach man on man's level.

In addition to proclaiming God's Word, the Son revealed God's nature to man. Through the Son, God communicated His great love for man and displayed His great power in a way that man could understand. As explained in Chapters II and III, God used the name of Jesus as the culminated revelation of His nature and the person of Jesus as the prophetic culmination of the Old Testament theophanies. This purpose of the Sonship is expressed by many verses of Scripture that teach the manifestation of God in flesh. John 1:18 describes this purpose of the Son: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Isaiah prophesied that this revelation would come: "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isaiah 40:5). Paul wrote that this indeed came to pass in Christ: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 4:6). In other words, the Son of God became the means by which the invisible, incomprehensible God revealed Himself to man.

Another purpose of the Son is to provide a fulfillment of many promises in the Old Testament to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the nation of Israel, and David. Jesus Christ will fulfill completely the promises relating to the descendants of these men, and He will do it in the millennial kingdom on earth (Revelation 20:4). He will be literally the King of Israel and of all the earth (Zechariah 14:16-17; John 1:49). God promised David that his house and throne would be established for ever (II Samuel 7:16). Jesus will fulfill this literally in Himself, being of the actual bloodline of David through Mary (Luke 3) and being the heir to the throne of David through His legal father Joseph (Matthew 1).

The Sonship also allows God to judge man. God is just and fair. He is also merciful. In His justice and mercy He decided not to judge man until He actually had experienced all the temptations and problems of humanity and until He had demonstrated that it is possible to live righteously in the flesh (with divine power, of course, but with the same power He has made available to us). The Bible specifically states that the Father will judge no one; only the Son will judge (John 5:22, 27). God will judge through Jesus Christ (Romans 2:16). In other words, God (Jesus) will judge the world in the role of One who lived in the flesh, who overcame sin in the flesh, and who made the same overcoming power available to all humanity.

In summary, there are many purposes for the Son. In God's plan the Son was necessary to bring salvation to the world. This includes the roles of 1) sacrifice, 2) substitute, 3) kinsman-redeemer, 4) reconciler, 5) mediator, 6) high priest, 7) advocate, 8) second Adam, and 9) an example of righteousness. The Sonship also made it possible for Christ to be 10) apostle, 11) prophet, 12) revealer of God's nature, 13) king, and 14) judge. All of these roles required a human to fulfill them; from them we can see why God came to the world in flesh as the Son.

After studying the purposes of the Sonship, it is easy to see why the Son came into existence at a point in time instead of being in existence from all eternity. God simply awaited the fulness of time when all these purposes could be put into action best (Galatians 4:4). Thus the Son did not have substantial existence until the conception of Christ in Mary's womb.

After the millennial reign and the last judgment, the purposes for the Sonship will be fulfilled and the reign of the Son will end. When we view the purposes for the Son, we can understand that the Sonship is temporary and not eternal; in the Bible we are told when the Sonship began and when the ministry of the Sonship will end.

In order to review and further explain a number of concepts about the Son, we can explore Hebrews 1, which contains a number of interesting references to the Son. Verse 3 describes the Son as the brightness of the glory of God and the express image of His person. The Greek word *hypostasis,* translated as "person" in the *KJV,* means substance, nature, or being. The *NIV* translates verse 3 as follows: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." In a similar passage, Colossians 1:15 says the Son is the image of the invisible God. Once again, we see that the Son is a visible manifestation of the Father in flesh. The Son is an exact representation or image of God with all the glory of God. In other words, the invisible God (Father) manifested Himself in visible flesh as the Son so that men could behold God's glory and could understand what God is truly like.

Hebrews 1 can be viewed as a restatement of John 1 in that God the Father was made flesh. Hebrews 1:2 says that God has spoken to us by His Son; John 1:14 says the Word was made flesh, and John 1:18 says the Son has declared God the Father. From these verses we understand that the Son is not distinct from the Father in personality, but is the mode by which the Father revealed Himself to man.

The Son and Creation

Hebrews 1:2 states that God made the worlds by the Son. Similarly, Colossians 1:13-17 says all things were created by the Son, and Ephesians 3:9 says all things were created by Jesus Christ. What does creation "by the Son" mean, since the Son did not have a substantial pre-existence before the Incarnation?

Of course, we know that Jesus as God pre-existed the Incarnation, since the deity of Jesus is none other than the Father Himself. We recognize that Jesus (the divine Spirit of Jesus) is indeed the Creator. These verses describe the eternal Spirit that was in the Son—the deity that was later incarnated as the Son—as the Creator. The humanity of Jesus Christ could not create, but God who came in the Son as Jesus Christ created the world. Hebrews 1:10 clearly states that Jesus as Lord was the Creator.

Perhaps these scriptural passages have a deeper meaning that can be expressed as follows: Although the Son did not exist at the time of creation except as the Word in the mind of God, God used His foreknowledge of the Son when He created the world. We know He created the world by the Word of God (Hebrews 11:3). He created the world with the knowledge of His plan for the Incarnation and the redemption of the cross in mind. Perhaps in this same foreknowledge He used the Sonship to create the world. That is, He predicated the entire creation on the future arrival of Christ. As John Miller explains, "Though He did not pick up His humanity till the fulness of time, yet He used it, and acted upon it, from all eternity."[7] Thus Romans 5:14 states that Adam was the figure of Him that was to come, namely Christ; for evidently God had the Son in mind when He created Adam.

We know that God does not live in time and He is not limited by time as we are. He knows the future with certainty and He can foreordain a plan with certainty. Thus, He can act on a future event because He knows it is going to happen. He can regard things that do not exist as though they do exist (Romans 4:17). That is how the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), and that is why the man Jesus could pray, "O Father, glorify thou

me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). Although God created man so that man would love and worship Him (Isaiah 43:7; Revelation 4:11), man's sin would have thwarted God's purpose in the creation had not God had the plan to restore man through the Son. God foresaw the fall of man, but He nevertheless created man since He had foreordained (predestinated) the Son and the future plan of redemption (Romans 8:29-32). The plan of the Son was in God's mind at creation and was necessary for the creation to be successful. Therefore, He created the world by the Son.

We know that the verses of Scripture that speak of creation by the Son cannot mean the Son existed substantially at creation as a person apart from the Father. The Old Testament proclaims that one individual Being created us, and He is Jehovah, the Father: "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" (Malachi 2:10); "Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself" (Isaiah 44:24).

Jesus was not crucified in a physical sense before creation, the Son was not begotten before creation, and the man Jesus did not exist to have glory before creation. (Note: Jesus spoke as a man in John 17:5, for by definition God does not pray and does not need to pray.) How can the Bible describe all these things as existing before creation? They existed in the mind of God as a predestined future plan. Apparently, the verses of Scripture that speak of God creating the world by the Son mean that God used and took advantage of His future plan of the Sonship when He created the world. Certainly the plan for the Son and for redemption existed in God's mind before and during creation. (For more discussion of this concept, see the treatment of Genesis 1:26 in Chapter VII.)

In summary, we can view creation by the Son in two ways: 1) The one Spirit of God, who later incarnated Himself as the Son, was the Creator. 2) Even though the Son did not physically exist, God had the plan of the Son in His mind at creation. He relied on that plan—He relied on the Sonship—to fulfill His purpose in creation despite His foreknowledge of man's sin.

The Firstbegotten

Hebrews 1:6 calls the Son the firstbegotten. This does not mean the Son was the first being created by God or even that He was created, for this same verse indicates that the "begetting" occurred after the creation of the angels. Certainly, the Son is not "eternally begotten" because verse 5 describes the begetting as occurring at a certain point in time: "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." So, in what sense is the Son the "firstbegotten"?

The term has several meanings. In one sense of the word, the Son was not just the *first* begotten but also the *only* begotten (John 3:16). That is to say, the Son is the only person literally conceived by the Holy Ghost (God); the virgin birth made it possible for complete deity and complete humanity to unite in one person. Moreover, the Son is the firstbegotten in the sense that He was planned in the mind of God before anything else. Furthermore, the Son is the firstbegotten in that He was the first to conquer sin and death. He is "the first-begotten of the dead" (Revelation 1:5), "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29), and "the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18). All these verses of Scripture use the same Greek word, *prototokos,* as in Hebrews 1:6. Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection since He was the first to be bodily resurrected and given a glorified body (I Corinthians 15:20).

Since Jesus Christ is the head of the church, which is called the "church of [belonging to] the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23), we can interpret the designation of Christ as "the firstborn [*prototokos*] of every creature" in Colossians 1:15 to mean the firstborn of the spiritual family of God that is called out of all creation. Through faith in Him we can become sons and daughters of God by the new birth (Romans 8:14-17). Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), the captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10), the apostle and high priest of our profession (Hebrews 3:1), and our brother (Hebrews 2:11-12). It is in His redemptive role that He can be called the firstbegotten or firstborn among many brethren.

Christ's title as firstborn has significance not only in the sense of first in order but also first in power, authority, and pre-eminence, just as the eldest brother has pre-eminence among his brothers. As applied to Christ, *firstborn* does not mean He was the first man physically born, but that He is first in power. This is the primary meaning of Colossians 1:15 when it says

He is "the firstborn of every creature," as we see from subsequent verses. Verses 16-18 describe Jesus as the creator of all things, the head of all power, and the head of the church. In particular, verse 18 says He is "the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

To summarize, Jesus is the firstbegotten or firstborn in several senses. 1) He is the first and only begotten Son of God in that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. 2) The plan of the Incarnation existed in the mind of God from the beginning, before anything else. 3) In His humanity, Jesus is the first man to conquer sin and so He is the firstborn of the spiritual family of God. 4) In His humanity, Jesus is the first man to conquer death and so He is the firstfruits of the resurrection or the firstbegotten from the dead. 5) Jesus is the head of all creation and the head of the church, so He is the firstborn in the sense of having pre-eminence among and power over all things, just as the eldest brother traditionally has pre-eminence among his brothers. The first four points refer to being first in order while the fifth refers to being first in power and greatness.

Christ's designation as the firstborn does not mean that He was created or generated by another God. Rather, it means that as a man Christ is the first and eldest brother in the spiritual family of God and that He has power and authority over all creation.

Hebrews 1:8-9

"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is

for ever and ever. . .God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." The first portion of the above passage clearly refers to the deity in the Son, while the second portion refers to the humanity of the Son. The writer of Hebrews is quoting a prophetic passage in Psalm 45:6-7. This is not a conversation in the Godhead but a prophetic utterance inspired by God and looking to the future incarnation of God in flesh. God was speaking prophetically through the psalmist to describe Himself in a future rôle.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have learned that the term "Son of God" refers to the Incarnation, or the manifestation of God in flesh. God planned the Son before the world began, but the Son did not come into actual substantial existence until the fulness of time. The Son had a beginning, for the Spirit of God begat (caused the conception of) the Son in the womb of Mary. The Son's reign will have an ending, for when the church is presented to God and when Satan and sin and death are finally judged and subdued, the role of the Son will cease. The Son fills many roles that in the plan of God could only be fulfilled by a sinless human being. Of course, the ultimate purpose of the Son is to provide the means of salvation for fallen mankind.

We conclude three things about the use of the term "Son of God." 1) We cannot use it apart from the humanity of Christ, for the word always refers to the flesh or to the Spirit of God in flesh. 2) *Son* is always used with reference to time, for the Sonship had a beginning and will have an ending. 3) As God, Jesus had all power, but as the Son He was limited in power. Jesus was both God and man.

The biblical doctrine of the Son is a wonderful and beautiful truth. It presents some complex ideas primarily because it is difficult for the human mind to comprehend a being with both a human and a divine nature. Yet through the Son, God vividly presented His nature to man, particularly His matchless love.

The doctrine of the Son does not teach that God the Father so loved the world He sent another person, "God the Son," to die and reconcile the world to the Father. On the contrary, it teaches that God the Father so loved the world that He robed Himself in flesh and gave of Himself as the Son of God to reconcile the world to Himself (II Corinthians 5:19). The one Jehovah God of the Old Testament, the great Creator of the universe, humbled Himself in the form of man so that man could see Him, understand Him, and communicate with Him. He made a body for Himself, called the Son of God.

God Himself provided a means of redemption for mankind: "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him" (Isaiah 59:16). His *own* arm provided salvation. A proper understanding of the Son, therefore, has the effect of magnifying and glorifying the Father. In His role as the Son, Jesus prayed to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth. . . I have manifested thy name. . . I have declared unto them thy name" (John 17:4, 6, 26). The

Father has both revealed Himself to the world and reconciled the world to Himself through the Son.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER V

[1]Heick, I, 179-180.
[2]Flanders and Cresson, p. 343.
[3]Miller, pp. 96-97.

6

FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST

"I and my Father are one" (John 10:30).
"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter. . .even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17).

Chapter IV discussed the biblical concept of the Son. In this chapter we examine the meaning of the terms *Father* and *Holy Ghost* as applied to God. We also explore the relationships and distinctions among the three terms of *Father, Son* and *Holy Ghost.* Do these terms identify three different persons or personalities in the Godhead? Or do they indicate three different roles, modes, functions, or offices through which the one God operates and reveals Himself?

The Father

The term "God the Father" is biblical and refers to God Himself (Galatians 1:1-4). God is the Father; He is not merely Father of the Son, but the Father of all creation (Malachi 2:10; Hebrews 12:9). He is also our Father by reason of the new birth (Romans 8:14-16). The title *Father* indicates a relationship between God and man, particularly between God and His Son and between God and regenerated man. Jesus taught many times that God is our Father (Matthew 5:16, 45, 48). He taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). Of course, Jesus as a man had an additional relationship to God in a sense that no one else has ever had. He was the only begotten Son of the Father (John 3:16), the only One who was actually conceived by the Spirit of God and the only One who had the fulness of God without measure.

The Bible plainly states that there is only one Father (Malachi 2:10; Ephesians 4:6). It also clearly teaches that Jesus is the one Father (Isaiah 9:6; John 10:30). The Spirit that dwelt in the Son of God was none other than the Father.

It is important to note that the name of the Father is Jesus, for this name fully reveals and expresses the Father. In John 5:43, Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name." According to Hebrews 1:4, the Son "by inheritance obtained a more excellent name." In other words, the Son inherited His Father's name. We therefore understand why Jesus said that He manifested and declared the Father's name (John

17:6, 26). He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy that stated the Messiah would declare the name of the LORD (Psalm 22:22; Hebrews 2:12). In what name did the Son come? What name did He obtain from His Father by inheritance? What name did the Son manifest? The answer is apparent. The only name He used was the name of Jesus, His Father's name.

The Son

Basically, the term "Son of God" refers to God as manifested in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind. The name of the Son is Jesus: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS" (Matthew 1:21). Since Father refers to deity alone, while "Son of God" refers to deity as incarnated in humanity, we do not believe that the Father is the Son. The distinction is pivotal. We can say the Son died, but we cannot say the Father died. The deity in the Son is the Father. Although we do not believe that the Father *is* the Son, we do believe that the Father is *in* the Son (John 14:10). Since Jesus is the name of the Son of God, both as to His deity as Father and as to His humanity as Son, it is the name of both the Father and the Son.

The Holy Ghost

The terms "Holy Ghost" and "Holy Spirit" are interchangeable, meaning identically the same. These two terms in the *KJV* are translated from the one Greek word *pneuma;* therefore, there is absolutely no distinction between the terms. Either is perfectly acceptable since both mean the same.

The Holy Spirit is simply God. God is holy (Leviticus 11:44; I Peter 1:16). In fact, He alone is holy in Himself. God is also a Spirit (John 4:24), and there is only one Spirit of God (I Corinthians 12:11; Ephesians 4:4). Therefore, "Holy Spirit" is another term for the one God.

That the Holy Ghost is God is evident from a comparison of Acts 5:3 with 5:4 and from a comparison of I Corinthians 3:16 with 6:19. These passages identify the Holy Ghost with God Himself.

We cannot limit the terms "Holy Ghost," "Holy Spirit," or "Spirit of God" to the New Testament, nor can we so limit the role or manifestation of God they describe. We find the Spirit mentioned throughout the Old Testament beginning with Genesis 1:2. Peter tells us that the prophets of old were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:21).

If the Holy Spirit is simply God, why is there a need for this term? The reason is that it emphasizes a particular aspect of God. It emphasizes that He who is a holy, omnipresent, and invisible Spirit works among all men everywhere and can fill the hearts of men. When we speak of the Holy Spirit, we are reminding ourselves of God's invisible work among men and of His ability to anoint, baptize, fill, and indwell human lives. The term speaks of God in activity! "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). It refers to God working among mankind to regenerate man's fallen nature and enable him to do the supernatural will of God in the world. We note that the Spirit is

the agent in the new birth (John 3:5; Titus 3:5).

Since the Holy Spirit is God Himself, we properly use the pronouns *He* and *Him* to refer to the Spirit. We often use "Holy Ghost" and "Holy Spirit" as abbreviated forms of "the baptism (or gift) of the Holy Ghost," and in such cases it is proper to use the pronoun *it* as a substitute. When we do this, however, we should always remember that the Holy Ghost is God and not merely an unintelligent force or fluid. The following verses of Scripture reveal that the Holy Ghost is not an unintelligent force but is in fact God: Acts 5:3-4, 9; 20:23, 28; 21:11.

The Spirit is revealed and received through the name Jesus. He is not a separate person with a separate identity who comes in another name. Jesus said, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name. . ." (John 14:26). So the Holy Ghost comes in the name of Jesus.

The Father is the Holy Ghost

The one God is Father of all, is holy, and is a Spirit. Therefore, the titles *Father* and *Holy Spirit* describe the same being. To put it another way, the one God can and does fill simultaneously the two roles of Father and Holy Spirit. The Scriptures bear this out.

1. John 3:16 says God is the Father of Jesus Christ and Jesus referred to the Father as His own Father many times (John 5:17-18). Yet Matthew 1:18-20 and Luke 1:35 plainly reveal that the Holy Ghost is the Father of Jesus Christ. According to these verses of Scripture, Jesus was

conceived by the Holy Ghost and was born the Son of God as a result.

The one who causes conception to take place is the father. Since all verses of Scripture in reference to the conception or begetting of the Son of God speak of the Holy Ghost as the agent of conception, it is evident that the father of the human body is the Spirit; it is only reasonable to conclude that the Holy Ghost is the Father of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2. Joel 2:27-29 records the words of Jehovah God: "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." Peter applied this verse of Scripture to the baptism of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 16-18). Thus the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the one Jehovah God of the Old Testament. Since there is only one Spirit, obviously the Spirit of Jehovah must be the Holy Spirit.

3. The Bible calls the Holy Spirit the "Spirit of the LORD" (Isaiah 40:13), the Spirit of God (Genesis 1:2), and the Spirit of the Father (Matthew 10:20). Since there is only one Spirit, all these phrases must refer to the same being. The Holy Spirit is none other than Jehovah God and none other than the Father.

For further study of the identification of the Holy Ghost with the Father, consider the following comparisons from the Bible:

1. God the Father raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24; Ephesians 1:17-20), yet the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11).

2. God the Father quickens (gives life to) the dead (Romans 4:17; I Timothy 6:13), yet the Spirit will do so (Romans 8:11).

3. The Spirit adopts us, which means He is our Father (Romans 8:15-16).

4. The Holy Spirit fills the life of a Christian (John 14:17; Acts 4:31), yet the Spirit of the Father fills hearts (Ephesians 3:14-16). It is the Father who lives in us (John 14:23).

5. The Holy Ghost is our Comforter (John 14:26, Greek *parakletos*), yet God the Father is the God of all comfort *(paraklesis)* who comforts *(parakaleo)* us in all our tribulation (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

6. The Spirit sanctifies us (I Peter 1:2), yet the Father sanctifies us (Jude 1).

7. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (II Timothy 3:16), yet the Old Testament prophets were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:21).

8. Our bodies are temples of God (I Corinthians 3:16-17), yet they are temples of the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 6:19).

9. The Spirit of the Father will give us words to say in time of persecution (Matthew 10:20), but the Holy Ghost will do so (Mark 13:11).

From all these verses of Scripture we conclude that Father and Holy Ghost are simply two different descriptions of the one God. The two terms describe the same being but they emphasize or highlight different aspects, roles, or functions that He possesses.

The Deity of Jesus Christ is the Father

The deity resident in Jesus Christ is none other than the Father. In other words, the Spirit in the Son is the Father. (See the section, "Jesus is the Father," in

Chapter IV for a full discussion of this point.)

The Deity of Jesus Christ is the Holy Ghost

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:19). and the Spirit of the Son (Galatians 4:6). Second Corinthians 3:17 says of the one Spirit, "Now the Lord is that Spirit." The *NIV* puts it even plainer, for it says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit," and "the Lord who is the Spirit" (verse 18). In short, the Spirit that is resident in Jesus Christ is none other than the Holy Spirit. The Spirit in the Son is the Holy Spirit.

Below are some parallel verses of Scripture which further reveal that the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Ghost.

1. The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets of old (I Peter 1:10-11), yet we know the Holy Ghost moved on them (II Peter 1:21).

2. Jesus will raise the believer from death (John 6:40), yet the Spirit will quicken (give life to) the dead (Romans 8:11).

3. The Spirit raised Christ from the dead (Romans 8:9-11), yet Jesus said He would raise Himself from the dead (John 2:19-21).

4. John 14:16 says the Father would send another Comforter, namely the Holy Ghost, yet in John 14:18 Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." In other words, the other Comforter is Jesus in another form—in the Spirit rather than the flesh. Jesus explained this in verse 17, saying that the Comforter was *with* the disciples already, but He would soon be *in* them. In other words, the Holy Ghost was with them in the

person of Jesus Christ, but the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, soon would be in them. Jesus further explained this point in John 16:7, saying that He had to go away or else the Comforter would not come. Why? As long as Jesus was present with them in the flesh He would not be present spiritually in their hearts, but after He physically departed He would send back His own Spirit to be with them.

5. The Holy Ghost abides in the hearts of Christians (John 14:16), yet Jesus promised that He would abide with His followers to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). Similarly, believers are filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:4, 38), yet it is Christ who dwells in us (Colossians 1:27).

6. Ephesians 3:16-17 says that by having the Spirit in the inner man we have Christ in our hearts.

7. Christ sanctifies the Church (Ephesians 5:26), yet the Spirit does (I Peter 1:2).

8. The Holy Ghost is the promised *parakletos* in John 14:26 (Greek word translated "Comforter" by the *KJV)*, yet Jesus is our *parakletos* in I John 2:1 (same Greek word translated "advocate" in the *KJV).* We should note that the same human writer—the Apostle John—penned both of these verses, so presumably he was aware of the parallel.

9. The Spirit is our intercessor (Romans 8:26), yet Jesus is our intercessor (Hebrews 7:25).

10. The Holy Ghost will give us words to say in times of persecution (Mark 13:11), yet Jesus said He would do so (Luke 21:15).

11. In Acts 16:6-7, the *RSV* and *NIV* both equate the Holy Spirit with the Spirit of Jesus.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

It is clear that the terms *Father, Son,* and *Holy Ghost* cannot imply three separate persons, personalities, wills, or beings. They can only denote different aspects or roles of one Spirit-being—the one God. They describe God's relationships to man, not persons in a Godhead. We use *Father* to emphasize God's roles as Creator, Father of spirits, Father of the born-again believers, and Father of the humanity of Jesus Christ. We use *Son* to mean both the humanity of Jesus Christ and God as He manifested Himself in the flesh for the purpose of man's salvation. We use *Holy Ghost* to emphasize God's active power in the world and among men, particularly His work in regeneration.

We should note that these three titles are not the only ones God has. Many other titles or names for God are very significant and appear frequently in the Bible, including terms such as LORD (Jehovah), Lord, Word, God Almighty, and Holy One of Israel. The oneness view does not deny Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, but it does refute the view that these terms designate persons in the Godhead. God has many titles, but He is one being. He is indivisible as to His existence, but His revelation of Himself to mankind has been expressed through many channels, including His revelation as the Father, in the Son, and as the Holy Ghost.

Ephesians 3:14-17, which we have used several times in this chapter, demonstrates that the Father, the Spirit, and Christ are one in the sense just described. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. . ." The *KJV* is ambiguous as to whether "his Spirit" means the Father's Spirit or Christ's Spirit. The *NIV, TAB, RSV,* and Nestle's Greek text all make it clear that "his" relates back to "Father." Thus, this passage identifies the Spirit in a Christian's heart as the Father's Spirit and also as Christ. The Father, Christ, and the Spirit all refer to the one indivisible God.

What of passages of Scripture that seem to describe more than one person in the Godhead? They appear to do so only because of years of usage by those who believe in more than one person in the Godhead. When a person strips his mind of all man-made interpretations, connotations, and doctrines, viewing these verses through the eyes of the original writers (who were devout monotheistic Jews), he will understand these verses to describe either the multiple attributes and roles of God or the dual nature of Jesus Christ. (For the discussion of particular verses of Scripture in this regard, see Chapters VII, VIII, and IX.)

Only two verses of Scripture in the entire Bible mention Father, Son (or Word), and Holy Ghost in a way that could suggest three persons or a special significance of the number three in relation to the Godhead. They are Matthew 28:19 and I John 5:7. However, both of these passages present serious problems for the trinitarian view.

Matthew 28:19

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", (Matthew 28:19).

In this passage, Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." However, this verse of Scripture does *not* teach that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate persons. Rather, it teaches the titles of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost identify *one name* and therefore one being. The verse expressly says "in the name," not "in the names."

To answer any doubt that the singular-plural distinction is significant or was planned deliberately by God, we need only read Galatians 3:16, where Paul emphasized the significance of the singular "thy seed" in Genesis 22:18. Many trinitarian scholars have recognized at least partially the significance of the singular in Matthew 28:19. For example, Presbyterian professor James Buswell states, "The 'name,' not 'names' of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in which we are to be baptized, is to be understood as Jahweh, the name of the Triune God."*1* His insight of the singular is correct, although his identification of the singular name is in error. Jehovah or Yahweh was the revealed name of God in the Old Testament, but Jesus is the revealed name of God in the New Testament. However, the name Jesus includes Jehovah since Jesus means Jehovah-Savior.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost all describe the one God, so the phrase in Matthew 28:19 simply describes

the one name of the one God. The Old Testament promised that there would come a time when Jehovah would have one name and that this one name would be made known (Zechariah 14:9; Isaiah 52:6). We know that the one name of Matthew 28:19 is Jesus, for Jesus is the name of the Father (John 5:43; Hebrews 1:4), the Son (Matthew 1:21), and the Holy Ghost (John 14:26). The New Testament church understood this to be so, for they baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; I Corinthians 1:13). Matthew himself endorsed this interpretation by standing with Peter and the other apostles during the sermon in which Peter commanded the people to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:14-38).

Some claim that the references in Acts do not really mean that the name of Jesus was orally uttered as part of the baptismal formula. However, this appears to be an attempt to twist the language to comply with an erroneous doctrine and practice. Acts 22:16 says, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." *The Amplified Bible* says, "Rise and be baptized, and by calling upon His name wash away your sins." The *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* says "invoking the name." Therefore this verse of Scripture indicates the name Jesus was orally invoked at baptism. James 2:7 says, "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" The Greek phrasing indicates that the name was invoked over the Christians at a specific time. Thus, *TAB* says, "Is it not they who slander and blaspheme that precious name by which you are distinguished and called [the name of Christ invoked in baptism]?"

For an example of what "in the name of Jesus" means, we need only look at the story of the lame man's healing in Acts 3. Jesus said to pray for the sick in His name (Mark 16:17-18), and Peter said the lame man was healed by the name of Jesus (Acts 4:10). How did this happen? Peter actually uttered the words, "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 3:6). The name Jesus invoked in faith produced the result. The name signifies power or authority, but this signification does not detract from the fact that Peter orally invoked the name of Jesus in effecting the healing.

If the many scriptural passages in Acts that refer to water baptism in the name of Jesus do not describe a baptismal formula, then it is equally true that Matthew 28:19 does not indicate a formula. This interpretation would leave the church without any baptismal formula to distinguish Christian baptism from Jewish proselyte baptism and heathen baptism. But the Lord did not leave us without a baptismal formula; the church correctly carried out the instructions Jesus gave in Matthew 28:19 when the apostles used the name of Jesus in water baptism.

Many encyclopedias and church historians agree that the original baptismal formula in early church history was "in the name of Jesus." For example, Lutheran professor Otto Heick says, "At first baptism was administered in the name of Jesus, but gradually in the name of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit."[2] This was not a slip of the pen, for he later affirmed his view: "At first baptism was in the name of Christ."[3]

This interpretation of the one name in Matthew 28:19 as Jesus finds further support in the complete description of events of which this verse is a part. In Matthew 28:18-19, Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name. . ." In other words, Jesus said, "I have all power, so baptize in my name." It would twist the logic of the passage to read it to mean, "I have all power, so baptize in the names of three different persons." In the other accounts of the Great Commission, the name of Jesus figures prominently (Mark 16:17; Luke 24:47). Matthew's "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Mark's "in my name," and Luke's "in his name," all refer to the name of Jesus.

We should remember that water baptism is administered because of our past life of sin; it is for the "remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Since the name of Jesus is the only saving name (Acts 4:12), it is logical that the name be used in baptism. Jesus Himself linked remission of sins to His name: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

Matthew 28:19 does not teach three persons in one God, but rather it gives three titles of God, all of which properly apply to Jesus Christ. These titles sum up different roles of God or modes of His revelation; by its singular reference to "name," it focuses upon the one name of God revealed in the New Testament. That name is Jesus.

Further light on this interpretation that the name of God is Jesus comes from a comparison of Revelation 14:1 with 22:3-4. There is one name for the Father, God, and the Lamb. The Lamb is Jesus, so Jesus is the name of God and the Father.

I John 5:7

> *"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."*

Although this verse of Scripture is often used by those who believe in three persons of God, it actually refutes this view, for it says that "these three are one." Some interpret this phrase to mean one in unity as a man and wife are one. But it should be pointed out that this view is essentially polytheistic. If the word *one* referred to unity instead of a numerical designation, then the Godhead can be viewed as many gods in a united council or government. If *unity* were meant, the verse should have read, "These three agree as one."

It is also interesting to note that this verse does not use the word *Son*, but *Word*. If *Son* were the special name of a separate person in the Godhead, and if this verse were trying to teach separate persons, why did it use *Word* instead of *Son*? *Son* does not refer primarily to deity, but *Word* does. The Word is not a separate person from the Father any more than a man and his word are separate persons. Rather, the Word is the thought or plan in the mind of God and also the expression of God.

In a similar way, the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is not a separate person from the Father any more than a man and his spirit are separate persons. Holy Spirit just describes what God is. First John 5:7 says that three bear record in heaven; that is, God has recorded Himself in three modes of activity or has revealed Himself in three ways. He has at least three heavenly roles: Father, Word (not Son), and Holy Ghost. Furthermore, these three roles describe one God: "these three are one."*

*We have just explained I John 5:7 in a way that is consistent with the rest of Scripture. However, there is practically unanimous agreement among Bible scholars that this verse is really not part of the Bible at all! All major translations since the *King James Version* have omitted it, including the *Revised Standard Version*, *The Amplified Bible*, and the *New International Version*. So does the generally accepted Greek text (Nestle's text). The *NIV* renders I John 5:7-8 as, "For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three are in agreement."

The *KJV* included verse 7 only because the 1522 edition of the Greek text compiled by Erasmus included it. Originally Erasmus had excluded this passage from his editions of 1516 and 1519 because it was not in *any* of 5000 Greek manuscripts but only in late manuscripts of the *Vulgate*—the Latin version then used by the Roman Catholic Church. When the Catholic church put pressure on Erasmus to include this verse, he promised to do so if they could find even one Greek manuscript that had it. They finally produced one, so Erasmus reluctantly added the verse in, even though the manuscript so produced dated from 1520. (See Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968, p. 370.) From this evidence, it seems plausible that some overzealous copyist saw "there are three that testify" and decided to insert a little teaching of his own. Certainly, the passage in question is completely unrelated to the rest of John's discussion here and interrupts the flow of his logical argument.

Although all the evidence indicates this passage was not originally a part of I John, God had His hand of protection and preservation on His Word. Despite the efforts of man, God did not allow the passage

Is God Limited To Three Manifestations?

In this chapter we have discussed three prominent manifestations of God. Does this mean that God is limited to these three roles? Do the terms *Father, Son,* and *Holy Ghost* encompass all that God is? Despite the prominence these manifestations have in the New Testament plan of redemption and salvation, it does not appear that God can be limited to these three roles, titles, or manifestations. God manifested Himself in many ways in the Old Testament. He revealed Himself in many theophanies, including human forms and angelic forms. (See Chapter II.) The Bible uses many other names and titles of God. For example, LORD (Jehovah) and Lord appear frequently in the Bible. God has revealed Himself to man in many other relationships, too. For example, He is King, Lord, Bridegroom, Husband, Brother, Apostle, High Priest, Lamb, Shepherd, and the Word. While Father, Son, and Holy Ghost represent three important roles, titles, or manifestations of God, God is not limited to these three, nor does the number three have a special significance with respect to God.

A popular explanation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is that there is one God who has revealed Himself as Father in creation, Son in redemption, and Holy Ghost in regeneration. The recognition of these three manifestations does not imply that God is limited to three manifestations or that a threeness exists in the nature of God. Moreover, there is not a total distinction of one manifestation from another. For example, God was the Holy Spirit back at creation and used His role as Spirit in creation (Genesis 1:2). Furthermore, God used His role as Son—that is, He depended upon His plan for the future Sonship—back at creation (Hebrews 1:2). (See discussion of the Son and creation in Chapter V and discussion of Genesis 1:26 in Chapter VII.) God is our Father in regeneration as well as creation, because by the new birth we become the spiritual children of God.

We cannot confine God to three or any other number of specific roles and titles. Neither can we sharply divide Him because He is one. Even His titles and roles overlap. He may manifest Himself in many ways, but He is one and only one being.

How then can we address God in a way that describes everything He is? What name includes the many roles and attributes of God? Of course, we could simply use the term *God* or the Old Testament name *Jehovah*. However, we have a new name revealed to us—the name of Jesus. When we use the name of Jesus, we encompass everything that God is. Jesus is Father, Son, and Spirit. Jesus summarizes all the compound names of Jehovah. Jesus is everything that God is. Whatever roles or manifestations God has, they are all in Jesus (Colossians 2:9). We can use the name Jesus for God Himself, for it denotes the totality of God's character, attributes, and self-revelation.

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to contradict His Word. Whether a person believes that I John 5:7 was originally part of the Bible or that it was a later interpolation, it does not teach three persons of God but rather reaffirms the Bible's teaching of one indivisible God with various manifestations.

Conclusion

The Bible speaks of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as different manifestations, roles, modes, titles, attributes, relationships to man, or functions of the one God, but it does not refer to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as three persons, personalities, wills, minds, or Gods. God is the Father of us all and in a unique way the Father of the man Jesus Christ. God manifested Himself in flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, called the Son of God. God is also called the Holy Spirit, which emphasizes His activity in the lives and affairs of mankind.

God is not limited to these three manifestations; however, in the glorious revelation of the one God, the New Testament does not deviate from the strict monotheism of the Old Testament. Rather, the Bible presents Jesus as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Jesus is not just the manifestation of one of three persons in the Godhead, but He is the incarnation of the Father, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Truly, in Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VI

[1] James Buswell, Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), I, 23.

[2] Heick, I, 53. See also, "Baptism (Early Christian)," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, II, 384, 389.

[3] Heick, I, 87.

7

OLD TESTAMENT EXPLANATIONS

In the preceding chapters we presented the basic Bible truths about God. We have asserted that He is essentially one and that the fulness of God dwells in Jesus. In this chapter we will discuss a few Old Testament passages that some trinitarians use in an attempt to contradict these basic truths. We will examine these references to show that they do not contradict, but rather harmonize with, the rest of the Bible. Chapters VIII and IX will do the same for some New Testament verses of Scripture.

Elohim

The most commonly used Hebrew word of God is *Elohim.* This is the original word in almost every Old Testament passage where we see the English word

God. It is the plural form of the Hebrew word *Eloah,* which means God or deity.

Most scholars agree that the use of the plural word *Elohim* indicates God's greatness or His multiple attributes; it does not imply a plurality of persons or personalities. The Jews certainly do not see the plural form as compromising their strong monotheism. Flanders and Cresson explain that the plural usage in Hebrew has a certain function other than to indicate plurality: "The form of the word, Elohim, is plural. The Hebrews pluralized nouns to express greatness or majesty."[1]

The Bible itself reveals that the only way to understand the plural form of *Elohim* is that it expresses God's majesty and not a plurality in the Godhead, both by its insistence on one God and by its use of *Elohim* in situations that definitely portray only one person or personality. For example, *Elohim* identifies the singular manifestation of God in human form to Jacob (Genesis 32:30). The Israelites used the word *elohim* for the golden calf they made in the wilderness (Exodus 32:1, 4, 8, 23, 31), yet the Bible account makes it clear that there was only one golden calf (Exodus 32:4, 5, 8, 19-20, 24, 35). The Old Testament often uses *elohim* for singular pagan gods such as Baalberith (Judges 8:33), Chemosh (Judges 11:24), Dagon (Judges 16:23), Baalzebub (II Kings 1:2-3), and Nisroch (II Kings 19:37). The Bible even applies *Elohim* to Jesus Christ (Psalm 45:6; Zechariah 12:8-10; 14:5), and no one suggests there is a plurality of persons in Jesus. So the word *Elohim* does not indicate three persons in the Godhead. Only one being called

Elohim wrestled with Jacob, only one golden calf was called *elohim,* and one Lord Jesus Christ is God made manifest in flesh.

Genesis 1:26

> *"And God said, Let us make man in our image."*

Why does this verse use a plural pronoun for God? Before we answer this, let us note that the Bible uses singular pronouns to refer to God hundreds of times. The very next verse uses the singular to show how God fulfilled verse 26: "So God created man in his own image" (Genesis 1:27). Genesis 2:7 says, "And the LORD God formed man." We must therefore reconcile the plural in 1:26 with the singular in 1:27 and 2:7. We must also look at God's image creature, which is man. Regardless of how we identify the various components that make up a man, a man definitely has one personality and will. He is one person in every way. This indicates that the Creator in whose image man was made is also one being with one personality and will.

Any interpretation of Genesis 1:26 that permits the existence of more than one person of God runs into severe difficulties. Isaiah 44:24 says the LORD created the heavens alone and created the earth by Himself. There was only one Creator according to Malachi 2:10. Furthermore, if the plural in Genesis 1:26 refers to the Son of God, how do we reconcile this with the scriptural record that the Son was not born until at least four thousand years later in Bethlehem? The Son was made of a woman (Galatians 4:4); if the Son was present in the beginning who was His mother? If the Son be a spirit being, who was His spirit mother?

Since Genesis 1:26 cannot mean two or more persons in the Godhead, what does it mean? The Jews have traditionally interpreted it to mean that God talked to the angels at creation.[2] This does not imply that the angels actually took part in creation but that God informed them of His plans and solicited their comments out of courtesy and respect. On at least one other occasion God talked to the angels and requested their opinions in formulating His plans (I Kings 22:19-22). We do know that the angels were present at the creation (Job 38:4-7).

Other commentators have suggested that Genesis 1:26 simply describes God as He counseled with His own will. Ephesians 1:11 supports this view, saying that God works all things "after the counsel of his own will." By analogy, this is similar to a man saying "Let's see" (let us see) even when he is planning by himself.

Others explain this passage as a majestic or literary plural. That is, in formal speaking and writing the speaker or writer often refers to himself in the plural, especially if the speaker is of royalty. Biblical examples of the majestic plural can be cited to illustrate this practice. For example, Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar, "We will tell the interpretation thereof before the king" even though Daniel alone proceeded to give the interpretation to the king (Daniel 2:36). King Artaxerxes alternately referred to himself in the singular and the plural in his correspondence. Once, he wrote, "The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me" (Ezra 4:18). In a letter to Ezra, Artaxerxes called himself "I" in one place (Ezra 7:13) but "we" in another place (7:24).

The use of the plural in Genesis 1:26 also may be similar to the plural *Elohim* in denoting the greatness and majesty of God or the multiple attributes of God. In other words, the plural pronoun simply agrees with and substitutes for the plural noun *Elohim*.

Still another explanation is that this passage describes God's foreknowledge of the future arrival of the Son, much like prophetic passages in the Psalms. We must realize that God does not live in time. His plans are real to Him even though they are in the future as far as we are concerned. He calls those things that are not as though they are (Romans 4:17). A day is as a thousand years to Him and a thousand years is as a day (II Peter 3:8). His plan—the Word—existed from the beginning in the mind of God (John 1:1). As far as God was concerned, the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world (I Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8). It is not surprising that God could look down the corridors of time and address a prophetic utterance to the Son. Romans 5:14 says that Adam was a figure of Him who was to come, that is, Jesus Christ. When God created Adam, He had already thought about the Incarnation and created Adam with that plan in mind.

Taking this idea a step further, Hebrews 1:1-2 says that God made the worlds by the Son. How could this be, seeing that the Son did not come into existence

until a point in time much later that creation? (Hebrews 1:5-6). (See Chapter V.) To paraphrase John Miller (quoted in Chapter V), God used the Sonship to make the world. That is, He hinged everything on the future arrival of Christ. Though He did not pick up the humanity until the fulness of time was come, it was in His plan from the beginning, and He used it and acted upon it from the start. He created man in the image of the future Son of God, and He created man knowing that although man would sin the future Sonship would provide a way of salvation.

God created man in the beginning so that man would love and worship Him (Isaiah 43:7; Revelation 4:11). However, by reason of His foreknowledge God knew that man would fall into sin. This would defeat God's purpose in creating man. If this was all there was to the future, then God would have never created man. However, God had in His mind the plan for the Incarnation and the plan of salvation through the atoning death of Christ. So, even though God knew man would sin, He also knew that through the Son of God man could be restored and could fulfill God's original purpose. It is apparent, then, that when God created man he had the future arrival of the Son in mind. It is in this sense that God created the worlds through the Son or by using the Son, for without the Son, God's whole purpose in creating man would have failed.

In summary, Genesis 1:26 cannot mean a plurality in the Godhead, for that would contradict the rest of Scripture. We have offered several other harmonizing explanations. (1) The Jews and many

Christians see this as a reference to the angels. Many other Christians see it as (2) a description of God counseling with His own will, (3) a majestic or literary plural, (4) a pronoun simply agreeing with the noun *Elohim,* or (5) a prophetic reference to the future manifestation of the Son of God.

Other Plural Pronouns

There are a few other Old Testament uses of plural pronouns by God, namely Genesis 3:22, 11:7, and Isaiah 6:8. A reading of these verses of Scripture will show that they can easily mean God and the angels (all three verses) or possibly God and the righteous (Isaiah 6:8). Any of the first four explanations given for Genesis 1:26 could adequately explain these plural usages.

The Meaning of One (Hebrew, *Echad*)

Without wavering, the Bible states that God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4). Some trinitarians suggest that *one* in respect to God means one in unity rather than absolutely one in numerical value. To support this theory they appeal to the Hebrew word *echad,* which the Bible uses to express the concept of one God. The word apparently can mean both one in unity and one numerically, for Strong defines it as "united, one, first." Biblical examples of the word used in the sense

of absolute numerical oneness are enlightening: a list of Canaanite kings each designated by the word *echad* (Joshua 12:9-24); the prophet Micaiah (I Kings 22:8); Abraham (Ezekiel 33:24); a list of gates each designated by *echad* (Ezekiel 48:31-34); and the angel Michael (Daniel 10:13). Certainly, in each of the above cases *echad* means one in numerical value. In view of the many Old Testament passages that describe in unequivocal terms God's absolute oneness (see Chapter I, especially the scripture references in Isaiah), it is evident that *echad* as used of God does mean the absolute numerical oneness of His being. To the extent that *echad* does convey a concept of unity, it connotes a unity of God's multiple attributes, not a cooperative union of separate persons.

If *echad* does not mean one in number, then we have no defense against polytheism, because three (or more) separate gods could be one in unity of mind and purpose. However, it is clearly the intent of the Old Testament to deny polytheism, and it does use *echad* to mean one in numerical value.

Theophanies

A theophany is a visible manifestation of God. (See Chapter II.) Since God is omnipresent, He can manifest Himself to different people in different places at the same time. It does not take a concept of more than one God to explain any of the theophanies; the one God can manifest Himself in any form, at any time, and in any place.

Let us analyze some specific theophanies or supposed theophanies often used to support the concept of a multi-person Godhead.

Appearance to Abraham

Genesis 18:1 says Jehovah appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre. Verse 2 says Abraham looked up and saw three men. Some trinitarians try to use these three "men" to prove a trinity of God. However, verse 22 reveals that two of the "men" left Abraham and went towards Sodom, but Jehovah remained to talk with Abraham a little longer. Who were the other two men? Genesis 19:1 says that two angels arrived in Sodom that evening. Clearly, the three human manifestations that appeared to Abraham were Jehovah and two of His angels.

Some interpret Genesis 19:24 to mean two persons: "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven." However, this does not mean one LORD on earth asked another LORD in heaven to rain down fire, because there is only one LORD (Deuteronomy 6:4). Rather, it is an example of restatement. Many passages in the Old Testament phrase one idea in two different ways as a literary device or as a means of emphasis. There is no evidence that after God's temporary manifestation to Abraham He lingered around and traveled to Sodom to oversee its downfall. The Bible only says the two angels went to Sodom. The *NIV* shows more clearly that Genesis

19:24 merely repeats the same idea in two ways: "Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the LORD out of the heavens." We should note that both statements describe the LORD as one being in one place doing one thing—in heaven, raining down fire.

The Angel of the LORD

We have discussed this subject in Chapter II. Many passages that describe a visitation of the angel of the LORD also indicate that the angel was really a manifestation of Jehovah Himself. There is no problem with this; it is easy enough for the one God to manifest Himself in angelic form.

A few passages describe the angel of the LORD as a separate being from the LORD. Therefore, these passages must refer to a literal angel, whatever "the angel of the LORD" may be in other passages. Indeed it is possible to interpret most (and some believe all) the "angel of the LORD" passages to mean a literal angel and not a manifestation of God. Under this view, the passages that attribute acts of the LORD to the angel do not mean the angel is the LORD Himself. Rather, they mean the LORD performed the acts by delegating them to an angel to do. For example, the LORD spoke or the LORD appeared by sending an angel to speak or appear.

So there are two ways to explain the "angel of the LORD" passages in a way that is consistent with one God. First, we can agree that the angel of the LORD is a manifestation of God in some passages, but only an angel in passages that clearly describe two beings. Alternatively, we can assert that the angel of the LORD does not describe an actual manifestation of God but only an angel who acts as an agent and messenger for God. The Hebrew and Greek words for angel simply mean messenger.

There is an interesting problem related to the appearance of the angel of the LORD to David at Ornan's threshing floor (II Samuel 24:16-17; I Chronicles 21:15-30; II Chronicles 3:1). II Samuel 24:16-17 clearly describes the angel of the LORD as being separate from the LORD, yet the passage in II Chronicles says the LORD appeared to David. There are three ways to reconcile this. First, we should note that "the LORD" appears in italics in II Chronicles 3:1 in the *KJV*. This means the translators supplied a word not actually in the original, but either implied therein or necessary for a proper English sentence. Possibly the subject of the sentence actually should be "the angel of the LORD" instead of "the LORD." Second, we can use an explanation similar to one advanced in Chapter II. Namely, it is proper to say the LORD appeared to David when He sent His angel to David, just as it is correct to say the LORD speaks to someone when He uses an angel, an audible voice, or an impression on the mind rather than a direct conversation with a visible manifestation of God. This is similar to prophecies in which the writer or speaker uses the first person ("I") even though the source is clearly God. Third, one could say that both the angel and the LORD appeared to David, with I Chronicles

describing the former and II Chronicles describing the latter. In any case, these passages cannot show more than one LORD.

The most complex passages relating to the angel of the LORD are in Zechariah. Zechariah 1:7-17 describes a vision seen by the prophet. In the vision, he saw a man on a red horse standing among myrtle trees. An angel then began to talk to Zechariah. The man among the myrtle trees was identified as the angel of the LORD. Presumably he was the angel talking to Zechariah, although some think two angels were present. In any case, the angel of the LORD spoke to the LORD and the LORD answered him (verses 12-13), thus proving the angel of the LORD was not the LORD, at least in this passage. Then, the angel talking to Zechariah proclaimed what the LORD said (verses 14-17). Thus, the angel was not the LORD; rather, he simply acted as a messenger and repeated what the LORD had said. Zechariah called the angel *lord* (verse 9, Hebrew *adon,* meaning master or ruler), but he did not call him Lord *(Adonai)* or LORD (Yahweh or Jehovah). Of course, *lord* is not a term reserved for God alone, as *Lord* and *LORD* are; for one properly can address even a man by the title *lord* (Genesis 24:18).

Zechariah 1:18-21 describes two other visions. In his vision of four horns, Zechariah asked a question, the angel answered it, and the LORD gave a vision of four carpenters (verses 18-20). Then Zechariah asked a second question and "he" answered (verse 21). The "he" of verse 21 was the same angel that had been talking all along—the same "he" of verse 19. If "he" in verse 21 was actually the LORD, then the LORD was speaking in that verse by using the angel. So, in this passage, the LORD gave the visions and the angel did the actual explaining. This does not require the angel to be God.

In Zechariah 2:1-13 we find a second angel who declared the word of the LORD in Zechariah's hearing to the first angel. Again, this does not mean the second angel was God but only that he was transmitting God's message. This indicates that the first angel definitely was not God or he would have already known what God's message was.

Zechariah 3:1-10 presents a new situation. First, Joshua the high priest stood before the angel of the LORD and Satan (verse 1). "And the LORD said unto Satan, the LORD rebuke thee" (verse 2). The easiest way to explain this is to say the prophet wrote "the LORD said" meaning that the LORD said it through the angel. This is why the spoken words were "the LORD rebukes thee" instead of "I rebuke thee." Next, the angel began to speak to Joshua as if he were God (verses 3-4). Perhaps the easiest explanation is that the angel was a messenger transmitting God's word. Finally, the passage more clearly portrays the angel as a messenger for God and not God Himself, because the angel began to use the phrase "saith the LORD" (verses 6-10).

The most logical explanation of the angels in Zechariah can be summarized as follows. Throughout the Book of Zechariah, the angel of the LORD was not the LORD but a messenger of the LORD. Sometimes this is obvious from the angel's use of phrases such as

"thus saith the LORD," while other verses omit this qualifying or explanatory phrase. The LORD spoke in all these passages by using His angel. There are other possible explanations, such as the following three: The angel was not the LORD but had the name of the LORD invested in him; the angel was not the LORD in chapters 1 and 2 but was the LORD in chapter 3; or the LORD spoke directly in Zechariah 3:2 and 3:4 while the angel stood by silently. In sum, we do not need to accept two persons of God to explain the "angel of the LORD" passages. Certainly the Jews have no problem in reconciling the angel of the LORD with their belief in absolute monotheism.

The Son and Other References To the Messiah

There are a number of references to the Son in the Old Testament. Do they signify a duality in the Godhead? Do they prove a pre-existent Son? Let us analyze these passages to answer these questions.

Psalm 2:2 speaks of the LORD and His anointed. Psalm 2:7 says, "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Psalm 8:4-5 speaks of the son of man. Psalm 45:6-7 and Psalm 110:1 also contain well-known references to Jesus Christ, the former describing Him both as God and as an anointed man and the latter describing Him as David's Lord. Proverbs 30:4, Isaiah 7:14, and Isaiah 9:6 also mention the Son. However, a reading of these verses of Scripture will show that each of them is prophetic in nature. Chapters 1 and 2 of Hebrews quote every one of the above passages in the Psalms and describe them as prophecy fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

Thus the passages in the Psalms are not conversations between two persons in the Godhead but are prophetic portraits of God and the man Christ. They describe God begetting and anointing the man Christ (Psalm 2:2-7), the man Christ submitting to the will of God and becoming a sacrifice for sin (Psalm 45:6-7), and God glorifying and giving power to the man Christ (Psalm 110:1). All of this came to pass when God manifested Himself in flesh as Jesus Christ. (For more on supposed conversations in the Godhead, see Chapter VIII. For a full explanation of the right hand of God mentioned in Psalm 110:1, see Chapter IX.)

The passages in Isaiah are clearly prophetic since they are in the future tense. In sum, the Old Testament references to the Son look forward into the future to the day when the Son would be begotten. They do not speak of two Gods or two persons in God, but rather of the humanity in which God would incarnate Himself. Similarly, other Old Testament references to the Messiah are prophetic and represent Him as both God and man (Isaiah 4:2; 42:1-7; Jeremiah 23:4-8; 33:14-26; Micah 5:1-5; Zechariah 6:12-13). Any duality seen in these verses of Scripture indicates a distinction between God and the humanity of the Messiah.

For a discussion of the fourth man in the fire (Daniel 3:25), see Chapter II. That passage does not refer to the Son of God begotten in the womb of Mary, but to an angel, or possibly (but doubtfully) to a

temporary theophany of God.

The Word of God

No one can maintain seriously that the Word of God in the Old Testament is a second person in the Godhead. God's Word is a part of Him and cannot be separated from Him. The Word of God does not imply a distinct person any more than a man's word implies that he is composed of two persons. Psalm 107:20 says, "He sent his word." Isaiah 55:11 says, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth." From these verses of Scripture, it is obvious that God's Word is something that belongs to Him and is an expression that comes from Him, not a separate person in the Godhead.

The Wisdom of God

Some see a distinction of persons in descriptions of the wisdom of God, particularly those in Proverbs 1:20-33, 8:1-36, and 9:1-6. However, these passages of Scripture merely personify wisdom as a literary or poetic device. We are all familiar with many examples in literature where an author personifies an idea, emotion, or other intangible thing for the sake of emphasis, vividness, and illustration. The utter fallacy of trying to make the Bible's literary personification of wisdom imply a personal distinction in God is plain for all to see, for all the above passages personify wisdom as a woman! So if wisdom is the second person in the Godhead, the second person is female.

The proper way to view wisdom in the Bible is to regard it as an attribute of God—part of His omniscience. He used His wisdom in creating the world (Psalm 136:5; Proverb 3:19; Jeremiah 10:12). Just as a man's wisdom is not a separate person from himself, so God's wisdom is not a separate person from God. Wisdom is something that God possesses and something that He can impart to man.

Of course, since Christ is God manifested in flesh, all the wisdom of God is in Christ (Colossians 2:3). He is the wisdom of God as well as the power of God (I Corinthians 1:24). This does not mean Christ is a separate person from God, but rather that in Christ dwells all of God's wisdom and power (along with God's other attributes). Through Christ, God reveals His wisdom and power to man. Wisdom is simply an attribute of God described in the Old Testament and revealed through Christ in the New Testament.

Holy, Holy, Holy

Does this threefold repetition in Isaiah 6:3 somehow hint that God is a trinity? We do not think this theory is very credible. Double or triple repetition was a common Hebrew literary practice, and it occurs many times in Scripture. Basically, it was used to give added emphasis. For example, Jeremiah 22:29 says, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD." Certainly this verse of Scripture does not indicate three earths. (If the triple repetition of the word *holy* has any other significance, it is a suggestion of the past, present, and future existence of God recorded in Revelation 4:8.) We conclude that "holy, holy, holy" strongly emphasizes God's holiness and does not imply a plurality of persons.

Repetitions of *God* or *LORD*

Is there evidence of a plurality of persons from repetitions of *God* or *LORD* in the same verse, such as threefold repetitions (Numbers 6:24-26; Deuteronomy 6:4) and twofold repetitions (Genesis 19:24; Daniel 9:17; Hosea 1:7)? A reading of these passages of Scripture will show they do not indicate a plurality in the deity. Let us analyze them briefly.

Numbers 6:24-26 is simply a threefold blessing. Deuteronomy 6:4 says God is one. Two of the repetitions in that verse are "LORD God." Does this mean two persons of God are indicated every time the phrase *LORD God* appears? Of course not. It just identifies the one God as none other than the LORD (Jehovah) worshiped by Israel. We have already discussed Genesis 19:24 in this chapter. In Daniel 9:17, the prophet merely speaks of God in the third person, and in Hosea 1:7 God speaks of Himself in the third person. This is not unusual, for in the New Testament Jesus spoke of Himself in the third person (Mark 8:38). In summary, all passages of Scripture that repeat the words *God, LORD,* or some other name for God follow common, normal usage. None of them suggests a plurality in the Godhead.

The Spirit of the LORD

A number of Old Testament passages mention the

Spirit of the LORD. This presents no problem, for God is a Spirit. The phrase "Spirit of the LORD" merely emphasizes that the LORD God is indeed a Spirit. It further emphasizes the LORD's work among men and upon individuals. It does not suggest a plurality of persons any more than when we speak of a man's spirit. Indeed, the LORD makes this plain when He speaks of "my spirit" (Isaiah 59:21).

The LORD God and His Spirit

This phrase found in Isaiah 48:16 does not indicate two persons any more than the phrases "a man and his spirit" or "a man and his soul." For example, the rich fool spoke to his soul (Luke 12:19), but this does not mean he consisted of two persons. "LORD God" means the sum total of God in all His glory and transcendence, while "his Spirit" refers to that aspect of Him with which the prophet has come into contact and which has moved upon the prophet. The very next verse (Isaiah 48:17) speaks of the "Holy One of Israel," not the holy two or holy three. Isaiah 63:7-11 talks about the LORD and "his holy Spirit," while Isaiah 63:14 speaks of "the Spirit of the LORD." Clearly, no personal differentiation exists between Spirit and LORD. (See Chapter IX for many New Testament examples in which *and* does not mean a distinction between persons.) The LORD is a Spirit, and the Spirit of the LORD is simply God in action.

The Ancient of Days And the Son of Man

Daniel saw a vision recorded in Daniel 7:9-28, in which he saw two figures. The first being Daniel saw was called the Ancient of Days. He had a garment as white as snow, hair like pure wool, a throne like fire, and wheels like fire. He sat upon the throne and judged thousands upon thousands of people. Then Daniel saw "one like the Son of man" coming to the Ancient of Days. This man was given an everlasting dominion over all people and an everlasting kingdom. Some trinitarians interpret this to be a vision of God the Father and God the Son. However, let us look at the account a little more closely.

In the Book of Revelation, it appears that the Ancient of Days is none other than Jesus Christ Himself! Revelation 1:12-18 describes Jesus Christ as clothed in a garment, with hair as white as wool, eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like fine brass as if they burned in a furnace. Moreover, many scriptural passages explain that Jesus Christ the Son of man will be the judge of all men (Matthew 25:31-32; John 5:22, 27; Romans 2:16; II Corinthians 5:10). Furthermore, Jesus will sit upon the throne (Chapter IV). In Daniel's vision, the horn (antichrist) made war until the Ancient of Days came (Daniel 7:21-22), but we know that Jesus Christ will come back to earth and destroy the armies of the antichrist (Revelation 19:11-21). In sum, we find that Jesus in Revelation fits the description of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7. If the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 is the Father, then Jesus must be the Father.

In Daniel 7:13, one like the Son of man comes to the Ancient of Days and receives dominion from Him. Who is this? The scene appears to be a vision of a man who represents the saints of God. This explanation is probably the one most consistent with the chapter. Daniel received the interpretation of the vision beginning with verse 16. Verse 18 says the saints of the most High shall possess the kingdom for ever and ever. Then verse 22 says the saints will possess the kingdom. Verses 26-27 say the kingdom and dominion (same words as in verse 13) shall be given to the saints of the most High, and this kingdom is an everlasting one. Of course, verse 27 concludes by saying all dominions are ultimately under God.

Daniel 7:16-28, therefore, gives us the interpretation of 7:9-14. By its own terms, the chapter identifies the "one like the Son of man" as a representation of the saints of God. The *NIV* translates the phrase in verse 13 as "one like a son of man." We should note the lack of the definite article *(the)* in this translation, which reflects a lack of the same in the original language. We should also bear in mind that in the Old Testament "son of man" can refer to any individual man (Ezekiel 2:1) or to mankind in general (Psalm 8:4; 146:3; Isaiah 51:12). In Psalm 80:17 the phrase connotes a man to whom God has given sovereignty and power. So the interpretation that "son of man" represents the saints is consistent with the use of the phrase in other passages of Scripture.

Some equate Daniel's "one like the Son of man" with Jesus Christ, since Jesus often called Himself the

Son of man. However, this identification ignores the interpretation that Daniel 7 itself gives. If Daniel meant to refer to Christ, why did he not call Him the Messiah as he did in 9:25? Furthermore, even if the "Son of man" in Daniel were Jesus Christ, "one like the Son of man" need not be. In fact, the phrasing could indicate that the man in Daniel's vision is not Jesus, but someone like Him, namely the saints or the church. We know that the saints are sons of God, joint heirs with Christ, brothers of Christ, conformed to the image of Christ, and like Christ (Romans 8:17, 29; I John 3:1-2).

In any event, we must remember that Daniel's vision was prophetic in nature and not descriptive of an actual situation in his time. If we assume that the man in Daniel 7 is Jesus Christ, then at most the vision shows Jesus' two roles of Father and Son. It cannot teach two persons because the Ancient of Days is identified as Jesus in His divinity. At most this passage may portray the dual nature and role of Jesus, much like the vision in Revelation 5 of the One on the throne (God in all His deity) and the Lamb (Jesus in His human, sacrificial role). (See Chapter IX for a full explanation of this passage in Revelation.)

In conclusion, "one like the Son of man" or "one like a son of man" in Daniel 7 represents the saints who will inherit the kingdom of God. If it does refer to Jesus Christ, then it describes Him in His human role just as the Ancient of Days describes Him in His divine role.

Fellow of Jehovah

In Zechariah 13:7, the LORD spoke of the

Messiah and called Him "the man that is my fellow." The key to understanding this verse of Scripture is to realize that the LORD described a "man." That is, He was speaking about the man Christ Jesus, saying this man would be His companion or one close to Him. This verse does not describe one God calling another God "my fellow God." This is even plainer in the *NIV* and *TAB*. The former translates the phrase as "the man who is close to me," while the latter has it as "the man who is My associate." Only the sinless man Christ Jesus could approach the holy Spirit of God and be truly close to God. That is why I Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Of course, through Christ, we can all achieve fellowship with God.

Conclusion

The Old Testament does not teach or imply a plurality of persons in the Godhead. We can satisfactorily explain all Old Testament passages used by some trinitarians to teach a plurality of persons, harmonizing them with the many other passages that unequivocally teach strict monotheism. Certainly the Jews have found no difficulty in accepting all the Old Testament as God's Word and at the same time adhering to their belief in one indivisible God. From start to finish, and without contradiction, the Old Testament teaches the beautiful truth of one God.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VII

[1] Flanders and Cresson, p. 48, n. 8.

[2] Conversation with Orthodox Rabbi David Rubin, Director of the Institute of Torah Studies, Jerusalem, Israel, November, 1980.

8

NEW TESTAMENT EXPLANATIONS: THE GOSPELS

This chapter discusses references primarily found in the Gospels that some have used to teach a plurality of persons in the Godhead. Although the next chapter will explore passages from Acts to Revelation, this chapter will explain some of them as they relate to questions raised in the Gospels. We must harmonize all these verses of Scripture with the rest of God's Word, which teaches one God. Interestingly enough, these verses support the oneness of God when they are understood correctly.

Four Important Aids To Understanding

From the outset of our discussion, let us emphasize four important points. If we understand

these clearly, most seemingly difficult verses of Scripture become readily explainable.

1) When we see a plural (especially a duality) used in reference to Jesus, we must think of the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ. There is a real duality, but it is a distinction between Spirit and flesh, not a distinction of persons in God.

2) When we read a difficult passage relative to Jesus, we should ask if it describes Him in His role as God or in His role as man, or both. Does He speak as God or as man in this instance? Remember that Jesus has a dual nature like no one else ever has had.

3) When we see a plural in relation to God, we must view it as a plurality of roles or relationships to mankind, not a plurality of persons.

4) We should remember that the New Testament writers had no conception of the doctrine of the trinity, which was still far in the future at the time they wrote Scripture. They came from a strict monotheistic Jewish background; one God was not an issue with them at all. Some passages may seem "trinitarian" to us at first glance because trinitarians through the centuries have used them and interpreted them according to their doctrine. However, to the Early Church, who had no concept of the future doctrine of the trinity, these same passages were very normal, ordinary, and readily understandable in their perception of the mighty God in Christ. To them there was no thought of contradicting strict monotheism and the deity of Jesus.

With these four points in mind, let us turn to some specific passages of Scripture.

The Baptism Of Christ

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17).

According to this passage, the Son of God was baptized, the Spirit descended like a dove, and a voice spoke from heaven. Luke 3:22 adds the further information that "the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him."

To understand this scene correctly, we must remember that God is omnipresent. Jesus is God and was God manifested in flesh while on earth. He could not and did not sacrifice His omnipresence while on earth because that is one of God's basic attributes, and God does not change. Of course, the physical body of Jesus was not omnipresent, but His Spirit was. Furthermore, although the fulness of God's character was resident in the body of Jesus, the omnipresent Spirit of Jesus could not be so confined. Thus, Jesus could be on earth and in heaven at the same time (John 3:13) and with two or three of His disciples at any time (Matthew 18:20).

With the omnipresence of God in mind we can understand the baptism of Christ very easily. It was not at all difficult for the Spirit of Jesus to speak from heaven and to send a manifestation of His Spirit in the form of a dove even while His human body was in the Jordan River. The voice and the dove do not represent separate persons any more than the voice of God from Sinai indicates that the mountain was a separate intelligent person in the Godhead.

Since the voice and the dove were symbolic manifestations of the one omnipresent God, we may ask what they represented. What was their purpose? First, we must ask what was the purpose of Jesus' baptism. Certainly He was not baptized for remission of sin as we are, because He was sinless (I Peter 2:22). Instead, the Bible says He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). He is our example and He was baptized to leave us an example to follow (I Peter 2:21).

Moreover, Jesus was baptized as a means of manifesting Himself, or making Himself known, to Israel (John 1:26-27, 31). In other words, Jesus used the baptism as the starting point in His ministry. It was a public declaration of who He was and what He came to do. For example, at Christ's baptism, John the Baptist learned who Jesus was. He did not know that Jesus really was the Messiah until the baptism, and after the baptism he was able to declare to the people that Jesus was the Son of God and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29-34).

Having established the purposes of Christ's baptism, let us see how the dove and voice furthered those purposes.

John 1:32-34 clearly states that the dove was a sign for the benefit of John the Baptist. Since John was the forerunner of Jehovah (Isaiah 40:3), he needed to know that Jesus was really Jehovah come in flesh. God had told John that the One who would baptize with the Holy Ghost would be identified by the Spirit descending upon Him. Of course, John was incapable of seeing the Spirit of God anointing Christ, so God chose a dove as the visible sign of His Spirit. So the dove was a special sign for John to let him know that Jesus was Jehovah and the Messiah.

The dove also was a type of anointing to signify the beginning of Christ's ministry. In the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil to indicate that God had chosen them (Exodus 28:41; I Kings 19:16). Priests in particular were both washed in water and anointed with oil (Exodus 29:4, 7). The oil symbolized God's Spirit. The Old Testament foretold that Jesus would be similarly anointed (Psalm 2:2; 45:7; Isaiah 61:1). In fact, the Hebrew word *Messiah (Christ* in Greek) means "the Anointed One." Jesus came to fulfill the roles of prophet, priest, and king (Acts 3:20-23; Hebrews 3:1; Revelation 1:5). He also came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17-18), and to keep His own law He needed to be anointed as prophet, priest, and king.

Since Jesus was God Himself and a sinless man, an anointing by a sinful human and anointing with symbolic oil was not enough. Instead, Jesus was anointed directly by the Spirit of God. Thus, at His baptism in water, Jesus was officially anointed for the beginning of His earthly ministry, not by symbolic oil but by the Spirit of God in the form of a dove.

The voice came from heaven for the benefit of the people. John 12:28-30 records a similar incident in which a voice came from heaven and confirmed the deity of Jesus to the people. Jesus said it came not for His benefit but for the people's sake. The voice was God's way of formally introducing Jesus to Israel as the Son of God. Many people were present at the baptism of Jesus and many were being baptized (Luke 3:21), so the Spirit singled out the man Jesus and identified Him to all as the Son of God by a miraculous voice from heaven. This was much more effective and convincing than an announcement coming from Jesus as a man. In fact, it appears that this miraculous manifestation effectively accomplished Jesus' purpose at His baptism.

The baptism of Jesus does not teach us that God is three persons but only reveals the omnipresence of God and the humanity of the Son of God. When God speaks to four different people on four different continents at the same time, we do not think of four persons of God, but of God's omnipresence. God did not intend for the baptism to reveal to the monotheistic Jewish onlookers a radically new revelation of a plurality in the Godhead, and there is no indication that the Jews interpreted it as such. Even many modern scholars do not see the baptism of Christ as an indication of a trinity but as a reference to "the authoritative anointing of Jesus as the Messiah."*1*

The Voice From Heaven

Three times in the life of Jesus a voice came from heaven: at His baptism, at His transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9), and after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (John 12:20-33). We have just explained that a voice does not indicate a separate person in the Godhead but only another manifestation of the omnipresent Spirit of God.

In each of the three cases, the voice was not for the benefit of Jesus but for the benefit of others, and it came for a specific purpose. As we have discussed, the voice at Christ's baptism was part of the inauguration of His earthly ministry. It was for the people's sake, just as the dove was for John's sake. The voice introduced Jesus as the Son of God: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). The voice at the transfiguration unquestionably was for the benefit of the onlooking disciples, for the message was, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). The third manifestation of the voice occurred when a group of Greeks (apparently Gentile proselytes) came to see Jesus. Jesus explained that the voice was not for Him but for the people (John 12:30).

The Prayers Of Christ

Do the prayers of Christ indicate a distinction of persons between Jesus and the Father? No. On the contrary, His praying indicates a distinction between the Son of God and God. Jesus prayed in His humanity, not in His deity. If the prayers of Jesus demonstrate that the divine nature of Jesus is different than the Father, then Jesus is inferior to the Father in deity. In other words, if Jesus prayed as God then His position in the Godhead would be somehow inferior to

the other "persons." This one example effectively destroys the concept of a trinity of co-equal persons.

How can God pray and still be God? By definition, God in His omnipotence has no need to pray, and in His oneness has no other to whom He can pray. If the prayers of Jesus prove there are two persons in the Godhead, then one of those persons is subordinate to the other and therefore not fully or truly God.

What, then, is the explanation of the prayers of Christ? It can only be that the human nature of Jesus prayed to the eternal Spirit of God. The divine nature did not need help; only the human nature did. As Jesus said at the Garden of Gethsemane, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). Hebrews 5:7 makes it clear that Jesus needed to pray only during "the days of his flesh." During the prayer at Gethsemane, the human will submitted itself to the divine will. Through prayer His human nature learned to submit and be obedient to the Spirit of God (Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 5:7-8). This was not a struggle between two divine wills, but a struggle between the human and divine wills in Jesus. As a man Jesus submitted Himself to and received strength from the Spirit of God.

Some may object to this explanation, contending that it means Jesus prayed to Himself. However, we must realize that, unlike any other human being, Jesus had two perfect and complete natures—humanity and divinity. What would be absurd or impossible for an ordinary man is not so strange with Jesus. We do not say Jesus prayed to Himself, for that incorrectly implies Jesus had only one nature like ordinary men. Rather, we say the human nature of Jesus prayed to the divine Spirit of Jesus that dwelt in the man.

The choice is simple. Either Jesus as God prayed to the Father or Jesus as man prayed to the Father. If the former were true, then we have a form of subordinationism or Arianism in which one person in the Godhead is inferior to, not co-equal with, another person in the Godhead. This contradicts the biblical concept of one God, the full deity of Jesus, and the omnipotence of God. If the second alternative is correct, and we believe that it is, then no distinction of persons in the Godhead exists. The only distinction is between humanity and divinity, not between God and God.

"My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?"

This verse (Matthew 27:46) cannot describe an actual separation between Father and Son because Jesus is the Father. Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). The Bible states that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (II Corinthians 5:19). Jesus was God the Father made manifest in flesh to reconcile the world to Himself. The cry of Jesus on the cross does not mean that the Spirit of God had departed from the body, but that there was no help from the Spirit in His sacrificial death of substitution for sinful mankind. It was not one person of the Godhead being deserted by another, but the human nature feeling the wrath and judgment of God upon the sins of mankind.

There were not two sons—a divine son and a human son—but there were two natures—deity and humanity—fused in one person. The divine Spirit could not be separated from the human nature and life continue. But in His agonizing process of dying, Jesus suffered the pains of our sins. Dying became death when He yielded His Spirit.

In other words, what Jesus meant when He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was that he had taken the place of sinful man on the cross and was suffering the full punishment for sin. There was no abatement of suffering because of His deity. Since all have sinned (Romans 3:23) and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), all mankind (except for the sinless Christ) deserved to die. Christ took our place and suffered the death that we deserved (Romans 5:6-9). Jesus was more than a courageous martyr like Stephen and more than an Old Testament sacrifice, because He died in our place and experienced for a time the death we deserved. On the cross, He tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). This death was more than physical death; it also involved spiritual death, which is separation from God (II Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:14).

No one alive on earth has felt this spiritual death in its fullest degree, because all of us live, move, and have our being in God (Acts 17:28). Even the atheist enjoys many good things such as joy, love, and life itself. Every good thing comes from God (James 1:17), and all life originates from Him and is upheld by Him. But, Jesus tasted ultimate death—the separation from God that a sinner will feel in the lake of fire. He felt the anguish, hopelessness, and despair as if he were a man eternally forsaken by God. So the human nature of Jesus cried out on the cross as Jesus took on the sin of the whole world and felt the eternal punishment of separation for that sin (I Peter 2:24).

We must not assume that the Spirit of God departed from the body of Jesus the moment He uttered the words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The divine Spirit left the human body only at death. Hebrews 9:14 says that Christ offered Himself to God through the eternal Spirit. Moreover, Jesus told His disciples with respect to His death, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that he shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (John 16:32). Thus, the eternal Spirit of God, the Father, did not leave the human body of Christ until Christ's death.

Communication Of Knowledge Between Persons In The Godhead?

Some believe the Bible describes transfers of knowledge between separate persons in the Godhead. This is a dangerous argument because it implies there could be one person in the Godhead that knows something another person does not know. This implies a doctrine of separate personalities and minds in God, which in turn leads to tritheism or polytheism.

Let us look at some passages of Scripture that need explanation. Matthew 11:27 says, "No man

knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." This verse simply states that no one can understand who the Son (the manifestation of God in flesh) is, except by divine revelation (from the Father). Jesus undoubtedly had this in mind when He told Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). We are told that no man can say Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3). Also, the Father revealed His nature and character to man through the Incarnation—through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Romans 8:26-27 says, "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us," and "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." These statements indicate only a plurality of functions of the Spirit. On the one hand, God places His Spirit in our hearts to teach us to pray and to pray through us. On the other hand, God hears our prayers, searches and knows our hearts, and understands the prayers He prays through us by the intercession of His own Spirit. This verse of Scripture does not imply a separation of God and His Spirit, because God is a Spirit. Neither does it indicate a separation of Christ as the searcher of hearts from the Spirit as intercessor, because the Bible also says Christ makes intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34), and the Spirit searches all things, including our hearts. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2:10-11). Although the Spirit searches the "deep things of God," we are not to think that there is a separation between God and His Spirit. What we are told is that God reveals things to us by His Spirit in our lives. His Spirit in us conveys truths from His mind to our minds: "But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." Then the passage compares man and his spirit to God and His Spirit. A man is not two persons, and neither is God.

Matthew 28:19

We discussed Matthew 28:19 in Chapter VI, showing that it describes one God with multiple offices but only one name. The focus is not on a plurality but upon oneness.

The Pre-existence Of Jesus

Many passages of Scripture refer to the existence of Jesus before His human life began. However, the Bible does not teach us that He existed separate and apart from the Father. On the contrary, in His deity He is the Father and Creator. The Spirit of Jesus existed from all eternity because He is God Himself. However, the humanity of Jesus did not exist before the Incarnation, except as a plan in the mind of God. Therefore, we can say the Spirit of Jesus pre-existed the Incarnation, but we cannot say the Son pre-existed the Incarnation in any substantial sense. John 1:1, 14 is a good summary of the teaching on the pre-existence of Jesus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . And the Word was made flesh. . . ." In other words, Jesus existed from all eternity as God. The plan of the future Sonship existed with God from the beginning—as an idea in the mind of God. Ultimately, this Word became flesh—as the extension of God the Father in human form. (For a description of this concept and its expression in John 1, see Chapter IV. For more on the Son and on the pre-existence of Christ, including a discussion of Hebrews 1, see Chapter V.)

Let us apply these concepts to various verses of Scripture that speak of the pre-existence of Christ. We can understand John 8:58 ("Before Abraham was, I am") to be a reference to the pre-existence of Jesus as the God of the Old Testament. We can understand John 6:62 ("What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before") in the same way, with Jesus using the phrase "Son of man" as the equivalent of "I" or "me" rather than to emphasize His humanity. In John 16:28 Jesus said, "I came forth from the Father." This, too, refers to His pre-existence as God. The divine nature of Jesus was God the Father, so the dual-natured Christ could say, "I came forth from the Father." This statement may also describe the Word, the plan that existed in the mind of God, becoming flesh, and being sent into the world.

In John 17:5 Jesus prayed, "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Again, Jesus spoke of the glory He had as God in the beginning and the glory the Son had in the plan and mind of God. It could not mean that Jesus pre-existed with glory as the Son. Jesus was praying, so He must have been speaking as a man and not as God. We know the humanity did not pre-exist the Incarnation, so Jesus was talking about the glory the Son had in the plan of God from the beginning.

Other verses of Scripture relating to the pre-existence of Jesus as God are covered in Chapters IV, V, and IX.

The Son Sent From The Father

John 3:17 and 5:30, along with other verses of Scripture, state that the Father sent the Son. Does this mean that Jesus, the Son of God, is a separate person from the Father? We know this is not so because many verses of Scripture teach that God manifested Himself in flesh (II Corinthians 5:19, I Timothy 3:16). He gave of Himself; He did not send someone else (John 3:16). The Son was sent from God as a man, not as God: "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). The word *sent* does not imply pre-existence of the Son or pre-existence of the man. John 1:6 states that John the Baptist was a man sent from God, and we know he did not pre-exist his conception. Instead, the word *sent* indicates that God appointed the Son for a special purpose. God formed a plan, put flesh on that plan, and then put that plan in operation. God gave the Son a special task. God manifested Himself in flesh in order to achieve a special goal. Hebrews 3:1 calls Jesus the Apostle of our profession, *apostle* meaning "one sent" in Greek. Briefly stated, the sending of the Son emphasizes the humanity of the Son and the specific purpose for which the Son was born.

Love Between Persons In The Godhead?

A popular philosophical argument for the trinity is based on the fact that God is love. The basic argument is: How could God be love and show love before He created the world unless God was a plurality of persons that had love one for another? This line of reasoning is faulty for several reasons. First, even if correct it would not prove a trinity. In fact, it could lead to outright polytheism. Second, why does God need to prove to us the eternal nature of His love? Why cannot we simply accept the statement that God is love? Why do we limit God to our concept of love, contending that He could not have been love in eternity past unless He had a then-existing object of love? Third, how does the trinitarian solution avoid polytheism and at the same time avoid saying merely that God loved Himself? Fourth, we cannot limit God to time. He could and did love us from eternity past. Even though we were not then in existence, He foresaw our existence. To His mind we existed and He loved us.

John 3:35, 5:20, and 15:9 state that the Father loves the Son, and John 17:24 says the Father loved Jesus before the foundation of the world. In John 14:31 Jesus expressed love for the Father. All of these statements do not mean separate persons. (Is it not strange that these passages omit the Holy Ghost from the love relationship?) What these verses express is the relationship between the two natures of Christ. The Spirit of Jesus loved the humanity and vice versa. The Spirit loved the man Jesus as He loves all humanity, and the man Jesus loved God as all men should love God. Remember, the Son came to the world to show us how much God loves us and also to be our example. For these two objectives to be achieved, the Father and the Son showed love for each other. God knew before the world began that He would manifest Himself as the Son. He loved that plan from the beginning. He loved that future Son just as He loved all of us from the beginning of time.

Other Distinctions Between Father And Son

Many verses of Scripture distinguish between the Father and Son in power, greatness, and knowledge. However, it is a great mistake to use them to show two persons in the Godhead. If a distinction exists between Father and Son as persons in the Godhead, then the Son is subordinate or inferior to the Father in deity. This would mean the Son is not fully God, because by definition God is subject to no one. By definition, God has all power (omnipotence) and all knowledge (omniscience). The way to understand these verses is to view them as distinguishing the divinity of Jesus (the Father) from the humanity of Jesus (the Son). The humanity or Sonship role of Christ is subordinate to His deity.

John 5:19 says, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." (See also John 5:30; 8:28.) In Matthew 28:18 Jesus proclaimed, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," implying that the Father gave Him this power. In John 14:28 Jesus said, "My Father is greater than I." First Corinthians 11:3 states that the head of Christ is God. All these verses of Scripture indicate that the human nature of Jesus could do nothing of itself but His human nature received power from the Spirit. The flesh was subject to the Spirit.

In speaking of the Second Coming, Jesus said, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). Again, the humanity of Jesus did not know all things, but the Spirit of Jesus did.

John 3:17 speaks of the Son as sent from God. In John 6:38 Jesus said, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Jesus did not come of Himself, that is of His humanity, but He proceeded from God (John 7:28; 8:42; 16:28). The Son did not teach His own doctrine, but that of the Father (John 7:16-17). He did not teach His own commandments, but taught and kept the Father's commandments (John 12:49-50; 15:10). He did not seek His own glory but He glorified the Father (John 8:50; 17:4). All of these passages describe the distinction between Jesus as a man (Son) and Jesus as God (Father). The man Jesus did not originate by the operation of the humanity, nor did the man Jesus come to display the humanity. The Spirit formulated the plan, conceived the babe in the womb, placed in that flesh all the character and quality of God, and then sent that flesh out into the world to manifest God to the world. In the end, that flesh will have completed its purpose. The Son will be submerged in God's plan so that God may be all in all (I Corinthians 15:28).

These verses describe the relationship of Christ's human nature as man to His divine nature as God. If we interpret them as making a distinction between two persons called God the Father and God the Son, there would be a contradiction. We would have God the Son with the following characteristics that are *not* of God: He would not have any power of his own; He would not have full knowledge; He would not do His own will; He would have someone greater than Himself; He would have His origin in someone else; and He would eventually lose His own individuality. These scriptural facts contradict the concept of "God the Son."

The *With* Passages

How do we explain the use of the word *with* in John 1:1-2 and I John 1:2? John 1:1 says the Word was *with* God, but then goes on to say the Word *was* God. As explained in Chapter IV, the Word is the thought, plan, or expression in the mind of God. That is how the Word could be with God and at the same time be God Himself. We should also note that the Greek word *pros,* translated here as "with," is translated as "pertaining to" in Hebrews 2:17 and 5:1. So the Word was with God in the sense of belonging to God and not in the sense of a separate person besides God. Furthermore, if *God* in John 1:1 means God the Father, then the Word is not a separate person for the verse would then read, "The Word was with the Father and the Word was the Father." To make this imply a plurality of persons in God would necessitate a change in the definition of *God* in the middle of the verse.

We should also note that I John 1:2 does not indicate that the Son was with God in eternity. Rather, it states that eternal life was with the Father. Of course, Jesus Christ manifested eternal life to us. He is the Word of life in verse one. However, this does not mean that eternal life existed as a separate person from the Father. It simply means the Father possessed eternal life in Himself—it was with Him—from the beginning. He showed that eternal life to us through His appearance in flesh, in Jesus Christ.

Two Witnesses

Jesus said, "I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me" (John 8:16-18). Just before these verses, Jesus had said, "I am the light of the world" (verse 12). This was an assertion of His Messianic role (Isaiah 9:2; 49:6). The Pharisees replied, "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true" (John 8:13). In response to their accusation, Jesus explained that He was not the only witness, but that there were two witnesses to the fact that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. These two witnesses were the Father (the divine Spirit) and the man Jesus. In other words, both God the Father and the man Jesus could testify that the Father was manifested in flesh, in Jesus. Jesus was both God and man and both natures could testify to that fact. No separation of persons in the Godhead was necessary for this. Indeed, if a person holds that the two witnesses were separate persons in a trinity, he would need to explain why Jesus did not say there were three witnesses. After all, the law required two witnesses but asked for three if possible (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). When Jesus referred to His Father, the Pharisees questioned Jesus about the Father, no doubt wondering when the Father had witnessed to them. Instead of saying the Father was another person in the Godhead, Jesus proceeded to identify Himself with the Father—the "I am" of the Old Testament (John 8:19-27). The two witnesses were the Spirit of God and the man Christ, and both testified that Jesus was God in the flesh.

Plural Usage

A number of times Jesus referred to the Father and Himself in the plural. These passages are in the Book of John, the New Testament writer who more than any other identified Jesus as God and the Father. It is wrong for anyone to suppose this plural usage to mean that Jesus is a separate person in the Godhead

from the Father. However, it does indicate a distinction between the deity (Father) and humanity (Son) of Jesus Christ. The Son, who is visible, revealed the Father, who is invisible. Thus, Jesus said, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also" (John 8:19); "The Father hath not left me alone (John 8:29); "He that hateth me hateth my Father also" (John 15:23); "Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:24); and "I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (John 16:32). These verses of Scripture use the plural to express a consistent theme: Jesus is not just a man, but He is God also. Jesus was not an ordinary man as He appeared to be outwardly. He was not alone, but He had the Spirit of the Father within Him. This explains the dual nature of Jesus and reveals the oneness of God.

How was the Father with Jesus? The logical explanation is that He was in Jesus. Therefore, if you know Jesus, you know the Father; if you see Jesus, you see the Father; and if you hate Jesus, you hate the Father. II John 9 states, "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." What is the doctrine of Christ? It is the doctrine that Jesus is the Messiah; He is the God of the Old Testament manifested in flesh. In other words, the apostle wrote that if we understand the doctrine of Christ we will realize that Jesus is both the Father and the Son. We therefore deny neither the Father nor the Son. When we accept the doctrine of Christ, we accept the doctrine of both the Father and the Son. It is also true that if we deny the Son we are denying the Father, but if we acknowledge the Son we have acknowledged the Father also (I John 2:23).

One other passage with a plural, John 14:23, deserves special attention: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The key to understanding this verse is to realize that the Lord was not speaking of His bodily entrance into us. Moreover, if there are two Spirits of God, one of the Son and another of the Father, then there would be at least two Spirits in our hearts. However, Ephesians 4:4 declares there is one Spirit. We know John 14:23 does not mean bodily entrance because Jesus had said, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). Certainly we are not in Jesus in the sense of the physical. So, what does this passage mean? It means a union—one in mind, purpose, plan, and life—with Christ. This is the same idea expressed in John 17:21-22 when Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."

Even so, why did Jesus use the plural in speaking of the believer's union with God? Of course, God has designed salvation in order to reconcile the believer with Himself. However, sinful man cannot approach a holy God, and finite man cannot comprehend an infinite God. The only way we can be reconciled to God and understand Him is through His manifestation

in flesh, through the sinless man Jesus Christ. When we are one with Jesus, then we automatically are one with God, since Jesus is not just a man but God also. Jesus used the plural to emphasize that in order to be united with God we must first receive the atonement through the blood of Jesus. There is one mediator between man and God, the man Jesus (I Timothy 2:5). No one comes to God except through Jesus (John 14:6). To be doctrinally correct, we must acknowledge that Jesus is come in the flesh (I John 4:2-3). When we receive Christ, we have received both the Father and the Son (II John 9). Our union with Father and Son is not a union with two persons in the Godhead, but simply a union with God through the man Jesus: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (II Corinthians 5:19).

Another way to think of our union with God is to remember the two different offices or relationships represented by Father and Son. The believer has available to him the qualities of both roles, such as the omnipotence of the Father and the priesthood and submission of the Son. He has both the Father and Son. However, he receives all these qualities of God when he receives the one Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost. He does not receive two or three Spirits. The bodily indwelling of the believer by God is called the gift (or baptism) of the Holy Spirit, and this gift makes all the attributes and roles of God available to us: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (I Corinthians 12:13).

If, on the other hand, a person were to interpret John 14:23 and 17:21-22 to describe the union of two separate persons in the Godhead; then to be consistent he would have to interpret the Scriptures to mean that believers become members of the Godhead just as Jesus is. Clearly, then, these passages allude to the union with God that the Son of God had and that we can enjoy by believing and obeying the gospel. (Of course, Jesus is also one with the Father in the sense that He is the Father, but this is not what these particular verses of Scripture describe.)

Conversations Between Persons In The Godhead?

There is no biblical record of a conversation between two persons of God, but there are many representations of communion between the two natures of Christ. For example, the prayers of Christ portray His human nature seeking help from the eternal Spirit of God.

John 12:28 records a request on the part of Jesus that the Father would glorify His own name. A voice from heaven spoke, answering this request. This demonstrates that Jesus was a man on earth but His Spirit was the omnipresent God of the universe. The voice did not come for the benefit of Jesus, but for the people's benefit (John 12:30). The prayer and voice did not constitute a conversation between two persons in the Godhead; it may be said that it was communication between Jesus' humanity and His deity. The voice was a witness to the people from the Spirit of God, revealing God's approval of the Son.

Hebrews 10:5-9 quotes a prophetic passage from

Psalm 40:6-8. In this prophetic depiction of the coming of the Messiah, Christ as a man speaks to the eternal God, expressing His obedience and submission to the will of God. Essentially this scene is similar to that of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane. It is obvious that Christ is speaking as a man because He says, "A body hast thou prepared me" and "I come to do thy will, O God."

In conclusion the Bible does not record conversations between persons of the Godhead, but between the human and divine natures. To interpret these two natures as "persons" creates the belief in at least two "Gods." (It is very strange that the Holy Ghost is never part of the conversations!) Moreover, "persons" would imply separate intelligences in the one deity, a concept that cannot be distinguished from polytheism.

Another Comforter

In John 14:16, Jesus promised to send another Comforter. In verse 26 He identified the Comforter as the Holy Ghost. Does this imply the Holy Ghost is another person in the Godhead? No. It is clear from the context that the Holy Ghost is simply Jesus in another form or manifestation. In other words, "another Comforter" means Jesus in the Spirit as opposed to Jesus in the flesh. In verse 16 Jesus told the disciples about the other Comforter. Then in verse 17 Jesus told them they knew the Comforter already, because He dwelt with them and would be in them. Who dwelt with the disciples at that time? Jesus, of course. The Spirit of Jesus dwelt *with* the disciples since the Spirit was robed in the flesh, but soon the Spirit would be *in* the disciples through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus made this even clearer when He said in verse 18, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

Jesus went to heaven in His glorified body so He could form a new relationship with His disciples, by sending back His own Spirit as the Comforter. He said to them, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9; II Corinthians 3:17-18). When we have the Spirit in us, we have Christ in us (Ephesians 3:16-17).

In short, Jesus had dwelt with the disciples physically for about three years, but the time had come for Him to depart. However, He promised He would not leave them alone, comfortless, or as orphans. Instead, He promised to come back in a new way. He would not come in a visible body to dwell with them and be limited by that body, but He would return in Spirit so that He could dwell in them. So the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is the Spirit of Jesus. This is Jesus manifested in a new way; Jesus can be *with* us and *in* us. He can be in all of His disciples all over the world at the same time and He can fulfill His promise to be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

Are Jesus And The Father One In Purpose Only?

According to John 17:21-22, Christians should be

one with each other just as Jesus was one with the Father. Does this destroy our belief that Jesus is the Father? No. In this passage Jesus spoke as a man—as the Son. This is evident because He was praying to the Father, and God does not need to pray. In His humanity, Jesus was one with the Father in the sense of unity of purpose, mind, and will. In this sense, Christians can also be one with God and one with each other (Acts 4:32; I Corinthians 3:8; Ephesians 2:14).

We must remember that the Son is *not* the same as the Father. The title *Father* never alludes to humanity, while *Son* does. Although Jesus is both Father and Son, we cannot say the Father is the Son.

In John 17:21-22, Jesus, speaking as a man, did not state that He is the Father. However, other passages describe the oneness of Jesus with the Father in a way that transcends mere unity of purpose and in a way that indicates Jesus is the Father. This is an additional level of oneness that is beyond our attainment because it speaks of His absolute deity. When Jesus said, "I and my Father are one," the Jews correctly understood Him to mean He was God, and they sought to kill Him (John 10:30-33). On that occasion, He did not merely claim unity with God but identify with God. Jesus also said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). No matter how united a Christian is with God, he could not make that statement. No matter how united two Christians are, one could not say, "If you have seen me, you have seen my friend." The same is true of a husband and wife, even though they are one flesh (Genesis 2:24). So, the oneness of Jesus and the Father means more than the oneness that human relationships can attain. As a man Jesus was one with the Father in the sense of unity of purpose, mind, and will (John 17:22). As God, Jesus is one with the Father in the sense of identity with the Father—in the sense that He is the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is no presentation of persons in the Godhead in the Gospels. The Gospels do not teach the doctrine of the trinity, but simply teach that Jesus has two natures—human and divine, flesh and Spirit, Son and Father. There are plural references to Father and Son in the Book of John, but this very book teaches the deity of Jesus Christ and the oneness of God more than any other. When we investigate these plural references we find that, far from contradicting monotheism, they actually reaffirm that Jesus is the one God and that the Father is manifest in the Son.

In the next chapter, we turn to the other New Testament books, the Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation, to complete our study. As with the Gospels, these books teach the oneness of God with no separation of persons.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VIII

[1] "Trinity, Holy (In the Bible)," *The New Catholic Encyclopedia,* XIV, 306.

9

NEW TESTAMENT EXPLANATIONS: ACTS TO REVELATION

This chapter is a continuation of Chapter VIII. It explains some verses in the New Testament from Acts to Revelation that are sometimes used to teach a plurality of persons in the Godhead. (Chapter VIII covers some verses of Scripture in this category if they relate to questions raised by the Gospels.)

The Right Hand Of God

Numerous passages in the New Testament tell us Jesus sits on the right hand of God. Peter used this expression in Acts 2:34, quoting Psalm 110:1. According to Acts 7:55, Stephen looked up into heaven while being stoned to death and "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." What does this phrase mean? Does this mean that there are two physical manifestations of God in heaven, God and Jesus, with the latter perpetually stationed on the right hand of the former? Is this what Stephen saw?

A physical interpretation of "the right hand of God" is incorrect. First, no man has seen God at any time, nor can a human see Him (John 1:18; I Timothy 6:16; I John 4:12). God is a Spirit and as such He is invisible (I Timothy 1:17). He does not have a physical right hand unless He chooses to manifest Himself in a human form. We know Stephen did not literally see God apart from Jesus. If he saw two persons, why would he ignore one of them, praying only to Jesus? (Acts 7:59-60). If he saw separate physical manifestations of the Father and the Son, why did he not see the Holy Ghost as a third person?

A careful reading of Acts 7:55 will support the statement that Stephen did not see God apart from Jesus. Verse 55 does not say Stephen saw the Spirit of God, but tells us he saw "the glory of God" and Jesus. In verse 56 Stephen said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." The only visual image or person Stephen actually saw was Jesus Christ.

Other problems arise if we take "the right hand of God" in a physical sense. Is Jesus sitting on the right hand of God as recorded in Acts 2:34, or is Jesus standing on the right hand of God as recorded in Acts 7:55-56? Is Jesus sitting on top of God's outstretched right hand or is Jesus sitting next to God's right hand? Is Jesus in the Father's bosom? (John 1:18). What about Revelation 4:2, which describes one throne in heaven and One who sits on that throne? Does the Father sit on the one throne and does Jesus sit beside it? What about the fact that Jesus is the One seated on the throne? (Revelation 4:2, 8 with 1:8, 18).

Obviously, then, the description of Jesus on the right hand of God must be figurative or symbolic. Indeed, this is evident from numerous references throughout the Bible to the right hand of God. In Psalm 16:8, David wrote, "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Does this mean the LORD was always bodily present at David's right hand? Psalm 77:10 says, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High." Did the psalmist promise to remember the number of years God had a right hand? Psalm 98:1 declares of the LORD, "His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory." Does this mean God defeated His enemies by holding back His left hand and crushing them with a physical right hand? Psalm 109:31 states that the LORD "shall stand at the right hand of the poor." Does He physically station Himself next to poor people all the time? The LORD declared in Isaiah 48:13, "My right hand hath spanned the heavens," and in Isaiah 62:8 the LORD swore by His right hand. Did God reach out a giant hand and literally cover the sky, or did God put His left hand on His right hand and swear by it? Jesus cast out devils by the finger of God (Luke 11:20). Did He pull down a giant finger from heaven and punch devils out of people?

Of course, the answer to all of these questions is "No." Therefore, we must understand "right hand of God" in a figurative, symbolic, or poetic sense and not in a physical, bodily sense. This being so, what does the phrase signify?

In the Bible, the right hand signifies strength, power, importance, and pre-eminence just as it does in the English phrases, "He is my right hand man" and "I would give my right arm for this." Trinitarian scholar Bernard Ramm says, "God's almightiness is spoken of in terms of a right arm because among men the right arm is the symbol of strength or power. Pre-eminence is spoken of as sitting at God's right hand because in human social affairs the right hand position with reference to the host was the place of greatest honor."[1]

Some biblical examples to show this association of the right hand with power are interesting and instructive. Exodus 15:6 proclaims, "Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power." Psalm 98:1 and Psalm 110:1 associate the right hand of God with victory over enemies. When the Bible speaks of Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, it means Jesus has all the power and authority of God. Jesus Himself made this clear in Matthew 26:64: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (See also Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69.) Jesus thus claimed to have all the power of God; by this implication He declared Himself to be God. The Jews understood these claims and because of them the high priest accused Jesus of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65). Apparently, the high priest knew the symbolic meaning of the right hand in the Old Testament, and he therefore realized that Jesus was claiming to have God's power and to be God. First Peter 3:22 further demonstrates that "right hand" means Jesus has all power and authority: "Who is gone to heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." Similarly, Ephesians 1:20-22 uses this phrase to say Jesus has pre-eminence over all principalities, powers, dominions, and names. This passage also links the right hand with the exaltation of Christ. In this connection, Acts 5:31 states, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (See also Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:33-34.)

Acts 5:31 indicates that the right hand of God or the arm of God sometimes specifically refers to God's power in salvation. Many other verses of Scripture speak of the right hand of God as representing the deliverance and victory God gives to His people (Exodus 15:6; Psalm 44:3; Psalm 98:1). Isaiah 59:16 says, "His arm brought salvation." It appears, therefore, that the description of Jesus on the right hand of God connotes that Jesus is the expression of God's saving power. This concept harmonizes with the association of the position of Jesus on the right hand of God with His mediatorial role, particularly His work as our intercessor and high priest (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 8:1).

With this understanding of the right hand of God, we still may wonder why the Bible sometimes says Jesus "sat down" on the right hand of God (as in Hebrews 10:12) instead of simply saying He is at the right hand of God (as in Romans 8:34). It is probable that this particular phrasing indicates that Jesus received complete glorification, power, and authority at a certain point in time. This exaltation began with His resurrection and was completed at His ascension. At that time He freed Himself from all human limitations and physical restraints. This is the opposite of the self-limitation to which Jesus submitted in the Incarnation as described in Philippians 2:6-8. He completed His role as a human walking on this earth.

No longer does Jesus submit Himself to human frailty and weakness. No longer is He the suffering servant. No longer are His glory, majesty, and other divine attributes hidden from the casual onlooker. He now exercises His power as God through a glorified human body. He now displays and will display Himself as the Lord of all, the Righteous Judge, and the King of the whole earth. That is why Stephen did not see Jesus Christ as the ordinary man He had appeared to be while on earth, but he saw Him with the glory of God and the power of God. Similarly, John saw Jesus revealed as God in all His glory and power (Revelation 1). This exaltation, glorification, and unveiling of Christ culminated at His ascension. Mark 16:19 says, "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God."

The phrase "sat down" indicates that the sacrificial work of Christ is not continuing but is complete. "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes… But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Hebrews 10:11-13).

In summary, we would encounter many inconsistencies if we were to interpret the description of Jesus on the right hand of God to mean a physical positioning between two Gods with separate bodies. If we understand it as symbolic of the power, strength, authority, pre-eminence, victory, exaltation, and saving ability of Jesus as manifested in flesh, then we eliminate the conflicting concepts. Furthermore, this interpretation is consistent with the use of the phrase "right hand of God" throughout the Bible. The "right hand" reveals the omnipotence and absolute deity of Jesus and vindicates the message of one God in Christ.

Returning to our original question, what did Stephen actually see? It is apparent that he saw Jesus. Isaiah 40:5 says with reference to the coming of the Messiah, "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Jesus is the revealed glory of God. Stephen saw the glory of God when he saw Jesus. He saw Jesus radiating the glory that He possessed as God and with all the power and authority of God. In short, he saw the exalted Christ. He saw Jesus not merely as a man but as God Himself, with all glory, power, and authority. That is why he called on God by saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59).

Greetings In The Epistles

Most of the epistles contain a greeting that mentions God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, Paul wrote, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:7), and "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 1:3). Does this phraseology indicate a separation of persons? If it were so interpreted, there would be several serious problems with which to contend.

First, why is there no mention of the Holy Ghost in these greetings? Even if these greetings are interpreted to teach a separation of persons, they do not endorse the doctrine of the trinity. From this interpretation, the greetings could teach binitarianism; they could also relegate the Holy Ghost to a junior role in the trinity.

Second, if we interpret other similar passages to indicate separate persons in the Godhead, we could easily have four persons in the Godhead. For example, Colossians 2:2 speaks of "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Other verses of Scripture talk about "God and the Father" (Colossians 3:17; James 1:27) or "God and our Father" (I Thessalonians 1:3). First Thessalonians 3:11 says, "Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." So if *and* separates different persons, we have at least four persons: God, the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

If the salutations do not indicate a plurality of persons in the Godhead, what do they mean? By referring to the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the writers were emphasizing two roles of God and the importance of accepting Him in both roles. Not only must we believe in God as our Creator and Father, but we must accept Him as manifested in the flesh through Jesus Christ. Everyone must acknowledge that Jesus is come in the flesh and that He is both Lord and Christ (Messiah). Consequently, the salutations emphasize belief not only in God, which the Jews and many pagans accepted, but also in God as revealed through Christ.

This explains why it was unnecessary to mention the Holy Ghost; the concept of God as a Spirit was wrapped up in the title of God the Father, especially to the Jewish mind. We must remember, too, that the doctrine of the trinity did not develop until much later in church history. (See Chapter 11 - TRINITARIANISM: DEFINITION AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.) Therefore, these phrases did not sound the least bit awkward or strange to the writers or the readers.

A study of Greek is very interesting in connection with these greeting passages. [25] The word translated "and" is from the Greek word *kai*. It can be translated as "and" or as "even" (in the sense of "that is" or "which is the same as"). For example, the *KJV* translates *kai* as "and" in II Corinthians 1:2 but as "even" in verse 3. Verse 2 says, "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ," while verse 3 says, "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 2 could properly appear as, "from God our Father, even from the Lord Jesus Christ." The *KJV* translates *kai* as "even" in several other places, including the phrases "God, even the Father" (I Corinthians 15:24; James 3:9) and "God, even our Father" (I Thessalonians 3:13). So the greetings could read just as easily, "from God our Father, even the Lord Jesus Christ." To further support this, the Greek does not have the definite article ("the") before "Lord Jesus Christ" in any of the salutations. Thus, even if we translate *kai* as "and," the phrases literally read, "from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ."

Even when the translations render *kai* as "and," they often agree that the phrase denotes only one being or person. Below are some examples:

Table 9: The Use of Kai

	Scriptural Reference	Version	Translation
1	Galatians 1:4	*KJV*	God and our Father
		NIV	our God and Father
		TAB	our God and Father
2	Ephesians 5:5	*KJV*	the kingdom of Christ and of God
		NIV	the kingdom of Christ and of God
		NIV (footnote)	Or 'kingdom of the Christ and God'
3	Colossians 2:2	*KJV*	the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ
		NIV	the mystery of God, namely, Christ
		NIV (footnote)	Some manuscripts 'God, even the Father, and of Christ'
		TAB	God [which is] Christ
4	II Thessalonians 1:12	*KJV*	the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ
		NIV	the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ
		NIV (footnote)	Or 'God and Lord, Jesus Christ'
5	I Timothy 5:21	*KJV*	before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ

		NIV	in the sight of God and Christ Jesus
6	Titus 2:13	*KJV*	the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ
		NIV	our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ
		TAB	our great God and Savior Christ Jesus
7	II Peter 1:1	*KJV*	God and our Saviour Jesus Christ
		NIV	our God and Savior Jesus Christ
		TAB	our God and Savior Jesus Christ
8	Jude 4	*KJV*	the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ
		NIV	Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord
		TAB	our sole Master and Lord, Jesus Christ

This table shows that *kai* sometimes identifies God as the Father, or even Jesus as God. From this, it is easy to see that *kai* sometimes identifies Jesus as the Father since the grammatical construction is similar in all three cases.

We conclude that the salutations do not indicate any distinction of persons in God. At the most, the use of *kai* in these cases denotes a distinction of roles, manifestations, or names by which man knows God. In at least some cases the use of *kai* actually identifies Jesus as the same being as God - the same being as the Father.

"The Apostolic Benediction"

Second Corinthians 13:14 reads, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." Again, we should remember that Paul penned this verse of Scripture at a time when trinitarianism was still a doctrine of the future, and therefore the verse was not puzzling or unusual at the time. Basically, the verse conveys three aspects or attributes of God that we can know and have. First, there is God's grace. God has made His grace available to mankind through His manifestation in flesh, in Jesus Christ. In other words, unmerited favor, divine help, and salvation come to us through the atoning work of Jesus. Then God is love, and love always has been part of His basic nature. He loved us long before He robed Himself in flesh as Christ. And finally, the baptism of the Holy Ghost gives us communion (fellowship) with God and with our fellow believers: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" - the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13). Through the indwelling Spirit of God, not the presence of the physical body of Jesus Christ, we have a present, continuing relationship with God unlike anything available to the Old Testament saints.

Second Corinthians 13:14 is logical and understandable when we interpret it as three important relationships God has shared with us or as three different works the one Spirit accomplishes. There are diversities of operations but only one God working all in all (I Corinthians 12:4-6).

Other Threefold References In The Epistles And Revelation

Several other verses of Scripture identify God by three titles or names. However, many more verses use only two designations for God, in particular Father and Lord Jesus Christ. But most verses of Scripture use only one designation for God. There does not appear to be any special significance as to the Godhead in the threefold references; none of them require any separation of persons. Let us analyze them one at a time.

Ephesians 3:14-17 uses the following titles to describe God: "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," "his Spirit," and "Christ." Interestingly, this passage actually stresses one God with no distinction of persons, because it describes the Spirit first as the Father's Spirit and then as Christ in our hearts. Although the *KJV* is unclear as to what "his" means, the *NIV*, *TAB*, *RSV*, and Nestle's Greek text clearly demonstrate that "his Spirit" means "the Father's Spirit." So, in this passage, the Father, the Spirit, and Christ are all identified as the same being. The only remaining distinction lies in the phrase, "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," which distinguishes between the Spirit of God and His manifestation in the flesh.

Ephesians 4:4-6 states there is one Spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father. Again this proves the oneness of God. The one God is Spirit and He is the Lord of all. The basic idea expressed in these verses is the oneness of God, not a threeness. Why was this thought restated in three different ways? Verse 4 connects the one Spirit with the assertion that there is one body, reminding us the one Spirit of God baptizes us into the one body (I Corinthians 12:13). Verse 5 groups "one Lord" with "one faith" and "one baptism," indicating we must condition our faith and our baptism on the person, name, and work of the Lord Jesus, not just on a belief in God as a Spirit. Verse 6 brings it all together, saying, "one God and Father of all, who is above all [i.e., who is Lord], and through all, and in you all [i.e., who is the Spirit in you]." The one God is the one Lord and the one Spirit.

A trinitarian interpretation of Ephesians 4:4-6 is not logical because it separates Jesus from God. If there are three persons maintained in these verses, they would be: God and Father, Lord, Spirit. This interpretation implies that the Father is God in a way that Jesus is not. It is against the theory of the trinity to think of Jesus as separate from God. Trinitarians must be consistent with their theory and accept Jesus as the one and only God of the Bible or else abandon their theology of one God.

According to Hebrews 9:14, Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit to God. The subject of the verse is the blood of Christ, so obviously the verse speaks of the human, mediatorial role of Christ. How did Christ make His great sacrifice? He did so through His divine nature - the eternal Spirit - which is none other than the Father. Jesus prayed to the Father in Gethsemane and received strength from Him to endure the crucifixion. This verse simply teaches that Christ was able to offer up His human body to God through the help of the Spirit of God.

Similarly, I Peter 3:18 says Christ was put to death in the flesh but quickened (made alive) by the Spirit so that He might bring us to God. We know that Jesus resurrected Himself from the dead by His own divine Spirit (John 2:19-21; Romans 8:9-11). In other places, the Bible says God raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:32). So, we have the man Christ raised from the dead by the Spirit of God - the divine nature of Christ - in order to reconcile mankind to God.

I Peter 1:2 mentions the foreknowledge of God the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the blood of Jesus. This verse simply describes different aspects of God in relation to our salvation. First, foreknowledge is part of God's omniscience, and He had it before the Incarnation and before the latter-day outpouring of the Spirit. Thus, it is natural for us to associate it with God's role as Father. Secondly, God does not have blood except through the man Jesus, so it is more natural to say the blood of Jesus rather than the blood of God or the blood of the Spirit. Finally, we are sanctified, or set apart from sin, by the power of the indwelling presence of God, so Peter naturally spoke of sanctification by the Spirit. As with II Corinthians 13:14, the Bible uses the most logical way to describe these attributes or works of God, namely by associating them with the roles, names, or titles God has.

Jude 20-21 is another verse of Scripture like this. It speaks of prayer in the Holy Ghost, the love of God, and the mercy of Jesus. As before, we can understand this easily as denoting different workings of God by using the roles most closely associated with those workings.

Revelation 1:4-5 says, in part, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ." According to verse 8, Jesus is the One "which is, and which was, and which is to come." He is the One on the throne (Revelation 4:2, 8). The seven Spirits belong to Jesus (Revelation 3:1; 5:6). This passage, therefore, merely gives us several ways of looking at the one God, who is Jesus Christ. The reason verse 5 mentions Jesus Christ in addition to the preceding description of God is to emphasize His humanity, for that verse calls Jesus the first-begotten of the dead.

If a person is determined to make this passage mean three persons, what would prevent him from dividing the Spirit into seven persons based on verse 4? Also, verse 6 speaks of "God and his [Jesus Christ's] Father," and the same logic would divide these into two persons - God and Father.

In summary, several verses of Scripture use three titles or names of God. In each case, the Bible uses a very natural and easily understandable way to describe a plurality or roles, attributes, or workings of God. In many cases, these verses actually provide additional evidence that there is one God with no distinction of persons.

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The Fulness Of God

In this book we have emphasized Colossians 2:9 a number of times because it teaches that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Jesus Christ. We understand this to mean all of God—all His attributes, power, and character—is in Jesus. Father, Son, Holy Ghost, Jehovah, Word, and so on are all in Jesus. Some trinitarians try to counter this interpretation by referring to Ephesians 3:19, which says we as Christians can be filled with all the fulness of God. Therefore, they argue, Colossians 2:9 does not indicate the full deity of Jesus any more than Ephesians 3:19 indicates the full deity of Christians. We will answer this argument by analyzing these two verses of Scripture in turn.

Colossians 2:9 refers to the fulness of deity in a way that Ephesians 3:19 does not. Immediately after stating all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Jesus, the Bible adds, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10). In other words, everything we need is in Jesus, and Jesus is omnipoteint. These statements are based on verse 9, and therefore verse 9 must indeed mean all of God is in Jesus.

In fact, this is the only logical conclusion based on the theme of the book to that point. Chapters 1 and 2 make the following claims about Jesus:

The Full Deity Of Jesus Stated In Colossians

Verse	Descriptions of Jesus
1. 1:15	He is the image of the invisible God
2. 1:16	He is the Creator of all things
3. 1:17	He is before all things (Eternal)
4. 1:17	By Him all things consist
5. 1:18	He is the Head of the church
6. 1:18	He is pre-eminent in all things
7. 1:19	All fulness of Godhead dwells in Him
8. 1:20	He has reconciled all things to God
9. 2:3	He has all treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Omniscience)
10. 2:5	We should have our faith in Him
11. 2:6	We should walk in Him
12. 2:7	We should be rooted and built up in Him
13. 2:9	All the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him
14. 2:10	We are complete in Him
15. 2:10	He is the Head of all principality and power (Omnipotence)

We should note that in Colossians 2:2, the subject is "the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ," or as the *NIV* puts it, "the mystery of God, namely, Christ." Verse 9 is merely an elaboration or further explanation of this mystery. The mystery of God (Christ) is that all the fulness of the deity dwells in Christ. Thus, we see from the context that Colossians 2:9 is an explanation of Christ's full deity.

The Greek word for Godhead in Colossians 2:9 is *Theotes,* which means the Deity. The word *bodily* reminds us of the word *incarnation,* which means the embodiment of a spirit in earthly form. Putting this together, Colossians 2:9 tells us Jesus is the incarnation of the fulness of the Deity—He is the bodily manifestation of everything God is. *The Amplified Bible* translates Colossians 2:9 as, "For in Him the whole fullness of Deity (the Godhead), continues to dwell in bodily form—giving complete expression of the divine nature." It translates Colossians 1:19 as, "For it has pleased [the Father] that all the divine fullness—the sum total of the divine perfection, powers and attributes—should dwell in Him permanently." The *NIV* translates Colossians 2:9 as, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." It translates Colossians 1:19 as, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him."

Turning to other translations of Colossians 2:9, the *Twentieth Century New Testament* has, "For in Christ the Godhead in all its fulness dwells incarnate"; The *New Testament in Modern English* (J. B. Phillips) has, "yet it is in him that God gives a full and complete expression of himself (within the physical limits that he sets himself in Christ)"; and *Living Letters: The Paraphrased Epistles* (Kenneth Taylor) has, "For in Christ there is all of God in a human body."

It is clear then, that Colossians 1:19 and 2:9 describe the full deity of Jesus Christ. We could not apply the statements in Colossians 1 and 2 to ourselves and be correct. We are not the incarnation of the

fulness of God. Nor are we omniscient, omnipotent, and so on. Whatever Ephesians 3:19 means, it cannot mean the same thing as Colossians 1:19 and 2:9.

What does Ephesians 3:19 mean, then, when it says "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"? When we look at the context, we see the emphasis of the passage: Christians can have the fulness of God in them because they have Christ. Since Christ is the fulness of God, when we have Christ in us we have the fulness of God. Verse 17 speaks of Christ dwelling in our hearts, and verse 19 tells us we can have the fulness of God by having Christ. Far from tearing down the absolute deity of Christ, Ephesians 3:19 establishes once again that all of God is in Christ. Colossians 2:10 supports this reading of the passage in Ephesians, saying, "And ye are complete in him [Christ]." The *NIV* makes it even clearer: "And you have been given fulness in Christ. . . ." Similarly, *TAB* says, "And you are in Him, made full and have come to fullness of life—in Christ you too are filled with the Godhead."

This may give rise to a further question; namely, how is a Christian different from the man Christ if both have the fulness of deity resident in them? The answer is that Jesus Christ is God revealed in flesh. He had His divine nature because He was conceived by the Spirit of God. His human nature has the divine nature dwelling in it, but His divine nature is God. Therefore, nothing can ever separate Jesus from His deity. We can live without the Spirit of God in us and the Spirit can depart from us, but this is not so with the man Jesus. Christ has all the attributes and character of God as His very nature, while we have them only by Christ dwelling in us. The nature of God is not ours. We can let it shine through us and control us (by walking after the Spirit), but we can also quench it and let our own human natures dominate (by walking after the flesh). Jesus Christ has all the fulness of the Godhead bodily because He is God Himself incarnated. We can have the fulness of God in our lives only as we let Jesus Christ live in us.

There is one more aspect we need to address with respect to Colossians 2:9. Some point out that Paul's purpose in writing this was not to oppose trinitarianism but Gnosticism. Of course, Paul did not aim his argument directly at trinitarianism, because that doctrine had not yet emerged! No doubt Paul was opposing the Gnostic belief that Christ was an inferior emanation from the supreme God. The fact remains, however, that Paul's language, which was inspired by the Holy Ghost, does exclude trinitarianism. Colossians is clearly an affirmation of the Oneness belief. It does not matter what false belief Paul was opposing; his positive doctrine still stands. The Oneness doctrine he taught certainly stands against Gnosticism, but it also stands against trinitarianism and any other belief which denies that all of the deity dwells in Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:6-8

This passage describes Jesus Christ as follows: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery

to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The *NIV* says, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

Apparently, this verse of Scripture is saying that Jesus had the nature of God, that He was God Himself. God has no equal (Isaiah 40:25; 46:5, 9). The only way Jesus can be equal with God is for Him to be God. So, Jesus was equal with (the same as) God in the sense that He was God. However, He did not consider His prerogatives as God something to be held or retained at all costs, but He was willing to lay these aside and assume a human nature so that He could save lost mankind. He willingly became a humble, obedient servant and even submitted to death on a cross.

Trinitarians view this verse of Scripture as describing two persons in the Godhead—God the Father and God the Son. In their view, the Son had the same nature as the Father but was not the Father. They contend that the divine Son became incarnated, not the Father. Many trinitarians further maintain that in the Incarnation this divine Son surrendered or emptied Himself of many of His attributes as God, including omnipresence. Thus, they speak of the *kenosis* or emptying of Christ, from the Greek word *kenoo* in the first part of verse 7. Although this word does include in its meaning the concept "to empty," most versions do not choose this meaning. Here are three renderings of *kenoo* in Philippians 2:7: "made himself of no reputation" *(KJV)*, "made himself nothing" *(NIV)*, and "stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity]" *(TAB)*.

From the Oneness point of view, Jesus is not God the Son, but He is all of God, including Father and Son. Thus, in His divinity, He is truly equal to, or identical to God. The word *equal* here means that the divine nature of Jesus was the very nature of God the Father. Jesus did not strip Himself of the attributes of deity, but rather stripped Himself of His dignity and rightful prerogatives as God while He dwelt among men as a human. The Spirit of Jesus, which was God Himself, never lost any of His omniscience, omnipresence, or omnipotence.

This verse only refers to the limitations Jesus imposed upon Himself relative to His life as a human. As the three translations quoted above indicate, the *kenosis* of Christ consisted of a voluntary surrender of glory and dignity, rather than a surrender of His nature as God. As a man, Christ did not receive the honor that was due to Him as God. Instead of acting in His rightful role as King of mankind, He became a ministering servant to mankind. As a man, He submitted to death on the cross. He did not die as God but as a man. So, this verse expresses a very beautiful thought: Although Jesus was God, He did not insist on retaining all His rights as God. Instead, He willingly stripped Himself of His right to glory and honor on earth by taking on the nature of a man

and dying. He did all of this so that He could provide salvation for us.

As a result of Christ's humbling, God (the Spirit of Jesus) has highly exalted Jesus Christ (God manifested in flesh). Jesus has a name that is above every name—a name that represents all that God is. The Spirit of God gave this name to the Christ (Messiah), because Christ was God manifested in flesh. Also, Jesus Christ has all power over things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, thereby giving glory to God the Father since the Father is in Christ. Philippians 2:9-11 describes all of this: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Many, and perhaps most, trinitarian scholars actually view the *kenosis* of Christ in a way consistent with Oneness. For example, one prominent scholar says Christ did not actually "empty" Himself of attributes of deity, for that would mean an abdication of deity, with Jesus becoming a mere demigod.[3] Instead, he explains the passage as follows: Jesus renounced not His divinity but His being in the form of God alone. He did not discard His divine attributes but concealed them in the weakness of human flesh. They were always available, but He chose not to use them, or He used them in a new way. He imposed limitations on Himself. His heavenly glory and majesty were no longer immediately apparent. In short, He hid

His divinity in humanity, but His deity was still evident to the eyes of faith.[4]

Colossians 1:15-17

We have explained this verse in Chapter V, which includes a discussion of the pre-existence of Jesus, His role as Creator, and His title as the firstborn from the dead.

Hebrews 1

We have discussed many parts of this passage in Chapter V, particularly verses 2-3, 6, and 8-10.

I John 5:7

Chapter VI explains this verse.

Revelation 1:1

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him." Here we find a distinction between the eternal Spirit of God and the man Christ. Only the Spirit could give the revelation of the events of the endtimes. The humanity of Christ could not know these things (Mark 13:32), so Jesus Christ knew them only through the Spirit. In addition, the deity of Christ was not a product of His humanity, but the divine-human union was a product of the deity. The Book of Revelation not only reveals things to come, but it also reveals the deity of Jesus Christ, and the knowledge of both must come from the Spirit of God. We soon find that Revelation does reveal Jesus as God, for in Chapter 1 John saw a vision of Jesus in all the power and glory of God.

The Seven Spirits Of God

This phrase appears in Revelation 1:4, 3:1, and 5:6. Does it describe seven persons in the Godhead? No, but if some people applied the same logic to this phrase that they use on other phrases in Scripture then they would have seven persons of the Spirit. The Bible lets us know, however, that there is only one Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4).

Why, then, does Revelation speak of seven spirits? We must remember that Revelation is a book filled with symbolism. Furthermore, seven is a very symbolic number in the Bible, and it frequently represents perfection, completion, or fulness. For example, God rested from creation on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2), the Old Testament Sabbath was on the seventh day (Exodus 20:10), the candlestick or lampstand in the Tabernacle had seven lamps (Exodus 25:37), Noah took seven pairs of clean animals into the ark (Genesis 7:2), Jesus told His disciples to forgive a brother seven times a day (Luke 17:4), and the Book of Revelation contains letters to seven churches (Revelation 1:11). Thus, the seven spirits of God simply indicate the fulness or perfection of the Spirit of God. It is a way of emphasizing the totality of God's Spirit. The phrase may also allude to the seven aspects of the Spirit recorded in Isaiah 11:2, especially since both Isaiah and Revelation describe the seven spirits as belonging to Jesus.

This brings up another point: the Bible does not identify the seven spirits as seven separate persons or even as one separate person. Rather, John clearly told us the seven spirits belong to Jesus Christ (Revelation 3:1; 5:6). Later in the book he described the Spirit in the singular (Revelation 22:17). Thus, the seven spirits symbolically represent the fulness and power of the one Holy Spirit, who is none other than the Spirit of Jesus.

The Lamb In Revelation 5

Revelation 5:1 describes One on the throne in heaven with a book (scroll) in His right hand. Then verses 6-7 depict a Lamb who comes and takes the book out of the right hand of the One that sits on the throne. Does this mean there are two persons of God? No. Once again, we must remember that the Book of Revelation is highly symbolic. In fact, we know the passage in question is symbolic. First, John did not see the invisible Spirit of God, because John himself said no man has ever done that (John 1:18, I John 4:12). In fact, no man can see God (I Timothy 6:16). Revelation 5:5 says a "Lion" would open the book, but in verse 6 John saw a "Lamb" instead. Verse 6 says the Lamb was slain but yet it moved. It had seven eyes, which symbolize the seven spirits or the sevenfold Spirit of God (verse 6) and the omniscience of God (Proverbs 15:3). The Lamb had seven horns, which signify the

fulness of God's power or God's omnipotence, because horns in the Bible usually symbolize power. (See Zechariah 1:18-19; Revelation 17:12-17.) All of the description of this scene demonstrates the symbolic nature of the passage. To understand it we must find out who the One on the throne is and who the Lamb is.

Revelation 4:2 and 8 describe the One on the throne as the "Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Yet, in Revelation 1:8 Jesus describes Himself as "the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (See 1:11-18 and 22:12-16 for further proof that Jesus is the speaker of 1:8.) Also the One on the throne is the Judge (Revelation 20:11-12), and we know that Jesus will be the Judge of all (John 5:22, 27; Romans 2:16; 14:10-11). Therefore, we can conclude that the One on the throne is Jesus in all His power and deity.

The Lamb is the Son of God—Jesus Christ in His humanity, particularly in His sacrificial role. The New Testament identifies Jesus as the Lamb who offered His blood for our sins (John 1:36; I Peter 1:19). That is why Revelation 5:6 describes the Lamb as slain. God could not and did not die; only the humanity of Jesus died. So the Lamb represents Jesus only in His humanity as a sacrifice for sin. The rest of chapter 5 also proves this by describing the Lamb as our Redeemer.

That this Lamb is not merely an ordinary human is evident since He has the fulness of God's Spirit, including omniscience and omnipresence (verse 6). He has other roles as the Lion of the tribe of Judah and as the Root of David (verse 5). The Lion denotes Christ's kingly role and His descent from King David. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:1-3; Luke 3:33), which was the tribe of royalty from the time of David. The lion is the symbol of Judah as ruler (Genesis 49:9-10). The Root of David alludes to Christ's role as David's source (Creator) and David's God.

Another fact supports our point that the Lamb represents Jesus in His humanity rather than as a second person in the Godhead. The reason the Lamb appears is to open the book held by God. Many interpret this book to be the title deed of redemption. Others see it as symbolic of the mysteries and plans of God. Either way, it required a human being to open, for God did not redeem us nor did He reveal Himself to us in His role as the transcendent God. He used His manifestation in human flesh as the means both to reveal Himself and to be our kinsman redeemer. (See Leviticus 25:25, 47-49.) So the Lamb represents the humanity of Christ.

Many prominent trinitarian scholars agree that Revelation 5 is symbolic and does not describe God the Father on the throne and God the Son standing by the throne. *The Pulpit Commentary* identifies the One on the throne as the Triune God,[5] and the Lamb as the Christ in His human capacity. It states, "The Son in his human capacity, as indicated by his sacrificial form of the Lamb, can take and reveal the mysteries of the eternal Godhead in which he, as God, has part."[6] Thus, even in the eyes of trinitarian scholars, this scene is not an indication of a trinity in the Godhead.

We can conclude that the vision in Revelation 5 symbolically depicts the two natures and two roles of

Jesus Christ. As Father, Judge, Creator, and King, He sits upon the throne; for in His deity He is the Lord God Almighty. As the Son, He appears as a slain lamb; for in His humanity He is the sacrifice slain for our sins. John did not see the invisible Spirit of God, but he did see a vision symbolically portraying Jesus on the throne in His role as God and as a lamb in His role as the Son of God sacrificed for sin.

If a person insists upon literalizing this demonstrably symbolic passage, then he would need to conclude that John still did not see two persons of God, but rather that he saw one God on the throne and a real lamb near the throne. This is not logical, but it reveals that the attempts of trinitarians to make the passage a proof text for a trinity is futile.

Other verses in Revelation make it clear that that Lamb is not a separate person from God. In particular, Revelation 22:1 and 3 speak of "the throne of God and of the Lamb," referring to the one throne of 4:2 and 5:1. After mentioning "God and the Lamb," Revelation 22:3 goes on to talk about "his servants," and verse 4 refers to "his face" and "his name." The Lamb and the glory of God light the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:23), yet the Lord God is the light (Revelation 22:5). So, "God and the Lamb" is one being. The phrase refers to Jesus Christ and designates His dual nature.

We conclude that Revelation 5, symbolic in nature, reveals the oneness of God. It describes One on the throne, but also describes a lion, a root, and a lamb. Does this description reveal four in the Godhead? Clearly not. Rather, there is only One on the throne. The lion, the root, and the lamb all represent in symbolic form the characteristics and qualifications of the One worthy to open the seals of the book. The lion tells us He is the King from the tribe of Judah. The root tells us He is the Creator. The lamb tells us He is God incarnate and our sacrifice. It is only in this last role that He can be our Redeemer and can open the book. Thus, Revelation 5 teaches there is one God and this one God came in flesh as the Lamb (the Son) to reveal Himself to man and to redeem man from sin.

Why Did God Allow "Confusing" Verses of Scripture?

Many people ask the question, "If the doctrine of Oneness is correct, why did God allow some verses that seemingly confuse the issue?" For example, if God intended for us to baptize in Jesus' name, why did He allow Matthew 28:19 to be recorded as it is? Even if we can understand this verse to mean that we should baptize in the name of Jesus Christ, is it not the source of unnecessary confusion?

Our answer is twofold. First, these verses of Scripture are not confusing when read in their orignial context. God cannot be responsible for man's mistakes. The verse as recorded by Matthew was perfectly understandable in the apostolic era, and it is not God's fault that later man-made doctrines have twisted the meaning of Scripture out of context.

Second, God sometimes has a purpose in

presenting truth in a partially hidden way. In Matthew 13:10, the disciples asked Jesus why He spoke to the people in parables. He explained that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven were not given to the people (verse 11). Why? "Because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. . .For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matthew 13:13-15). In other words, the people did not really desire to hear, see, and understand more about God. If He spoke to them plainly, they might understand despite their lack of spiritual desire. Therefore, Jesus spoke in parables so that only those who are truly hungry and thirsty for righteousness would be filled (Matthew 5:6), and that only sincerely diligent seekers would find the truth (Hebrews 11:6). After giving this answer, Jesus proceeded to explain to the disciples a parable He had just given to the multitude.

Could it be that God allows some verses of Scripture to be a stumbling block to those who are satisfied with the traditions of men and to those who do not seek the truth sincerely, earnestly, and wholeheartedly? Could it be that these same verses become great revelations to those who earnestly seek the mind of the Spirit? If so, this places a heavy responsibility on those who were reared knowing truth. If they do not have a hunger and a love for the truth equal to that which God requires of others, they will eventually fall from the truth themselves (II Thessalonians 2:10-12). Perhaps this explains why many in Christendom never find the truth, why some who have it lose it, and why some who have at least part of the truth lose what they do have.

Conclusion

Having surveyed the entire Bible in the last three chapters of this book, we conclude that nowhere does the Bible teach a separation of persons in the Godhead. Furthermore, we do not find either the word *trinity* or the doctrine of trinity anywhere in the Bible. In fact, the only time we find the number three connected explicitly with God is in the dubious verse of Scripture, I John 5:7. Even so, that verse describes the manifestations of God in heaven and concludes that "these three are one."

The New Testament does teach the dual nature of Jesus Christ, and this is the key to understanding the Godhead. Once we get the revelation of who Jesus really is—namely, the God of the Old Testament robed in flesh—all the Scriptures fall into place.

It is interesting to note two things about the verses of Scriptures used by trinitarians to teach a plurality of persons in the Godhead. First, many of these verses actually are strong proof texts of Oneness. Examples are Matthew 28:18-19, John 1:1-14, 14:16-18, I John 2:33, and 5:7. Second, many of these verses, if interpreted from a trinitarian point of view, eventually lead to a nontrinitarian doctrine such as Arianism,

binitarianism, or tritheism. For example, many use the prayers of Christ to prove the Father is a separate person from the Son. If this means the Son prayed in His role as God (a person in the Godhead), it leads to the belief of the subordination or inferiority of "God the Son" to God the Father. This interpretation defeats the trinitarian doctrine that the Son is co-equal with the Father, and it leads to a form of Arianism. On the other hand, if the Son prayed in His role as a man, then this explanation supports the Oneness belief and does not advance trinitarianism. This same argument demolishes trinitarian arguments that rely on verses of Scripture which say the Father is greater than the Son, the Son does not have all power, and the Son does not have all knowledge.

Likewise, trinitarian arguments that the recorded conversations, communication of love, and communication of knowledge indicate persons in the Godhead will lead to erroneous doctrine. Their arguments would establish three separate intelligences, wills, and personalities. They fall into the error of tritheism (belief in three Gods)—something in which trinitarians profess not to believe. Similarly, if they argue that Stephen saw two literal bodies of God in heaven, they cannot escape the concept of a plurality of Gods.

Since most of the trinitarian proof texts speak of two, not three, it appears that their interpretation should establish binitarianism (belief in two persons only) or at least a subordination of the Holy Spirit to the Father and Son. However, either doctrine contradicts orthodox trinitarianism.

In summary, most so-called trinitarian proof texts must be explained in a way consistent with Oneness or else they lead to doctrines that trinitarians themselves do not believe. On the other hand, the Oneness point of view clearly explains and harmonizes the whole of Scripture. It is consistent with the strict monotheism of the Old Testament and preserves the Christian belief in the Son of God who died for our redemption and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit who actualizes salvation in our lives.

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FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IX

[1] Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation,* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), p. 150.

[2] For verification of the Greek in these passages, see Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958). For a thorough discussion by a Greek scholar on the usage of *kai*, see Robert Brent Graves, *The God of Two Testaments* (n.p., 1977).

[3] Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), I, 139.

[4] *Ibid,* p. 138.

[5] H.D.M. Spence and Joseph Exell, eds., *The Pulpit Commentary* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), XXII (Revelation), 162.

[6] *Ibid,* XXII (Revelation), 165.

10

ONENESS BELIEVERS IN CHURCH HISTORY

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the Bible consistently teaches the oneness of God. However, the church world today would have us believe that throughout history the Christian church has accepted doctrine of the trinity. Is this really true? Were the church leaders in the post-apostolic age trinitarian? Were there any Oneness believers in church history?

From our research on this subject, we have come to three conclusions which we discuss in this chapter. 1. As far as we can tell, the early Christian leaders in the days immediately following the apostolic age were Oneness. It is certain that they did not teach the doctrine of the trinity as it later developed and as it exists today. 2. Even after the emergence of the trinitarian doctrine in the latter part of the second century, the doctrine of the trinity did not replace Oneness as

the dominant belief until around 300 A.D., and it did not become universally established until late in the fourth century. 3. Even after trinitarianism became dominant, Oneness believers continued to exist throughout church history.

The Post-apostolic Age

Church historians agree that the doctrine of the trinity did not exist as we know it today in the immediate post-apostolic age. (See Chapter XI.) The Christian leaders following the apostles did not allude to a trinity, but rather they affirmed their belief in the monotheism of the Old Testament and accepted without question the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ.[1] Since these leaders emphasized the doctrines associated with Oneness, it can be assumed that the post-apostolic church accepted the oneness of God.

The most prominent post-apostolic fathers were Hermas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, and Ignatius. Their ministries spanned the time from about 90 to 140 A.D.

Irenaeus, a prominent Christian leader who died around 200 A.D., had an intensely Christocentric theology and a firm belief that Jesus was God manifested in flesh. He held that the Logos which became incarnate in Jesus Christ was the mind of God, and was the Father Himself.[2]

Some scholars classify Irenaeus as a believer in the "economic trinity." This view holds that there is no eternal trinity but only a temporary one. It is very probable, therefore, that Irenaeus believed in a trinity of God's activities or roles rather than a trinity of persons, and so was a Oneness believer. Certainly he was not a believer in the doctrine of the trinity that developed later.

We find no references to the trinity as such in the early post-apostolic writings; they refer only to one God and to Jesus as God. Possible references to an emerging trinitarian doctrine, however, appear in some second century writings, mainly in a few references that seem to point to a triune baptismal formula.

There are several possible explanations for these few apparent references to a trinitarian concept in these writings. 1. Trinitarian readers and scholars may miunderstand these passages due to their own biases, just as they misinterpret Bible passages such as Matthew 28:19. 2. There is a strong possibility that later trinitarian copyists interpolated [added] passages of their own—a very common practice in church history. This is likely since the only existing copies of these early writings were written hundreds of years later than the originals. For example, an early writing called the *Didache* says communion should be administered only to those who are baptized in the name of the Lord, but it also mentions baptism in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.[3] However, the oldest existing copy of the *Didache* is dated 1056 A.D.[4] 3. No doubt false doctrine had already begun to creep into the church in some instances. In fact, false doctrines existed in apostolic days (Revelation 2-3), even false doctrine about Christ (II John 7; Jude 4). On balance, however, we conclude from historical evidence that the church leaders in the

age immediately following the days of Christ's twelve apostles were Oneness believers.

Oneness the Dominant Belief In the Second and Third Centuries

We have indicated that Oneness was the only significant belief in the early second century with regard to the Godhead. Even when forms of binitarianism and trinitarianism began to develop they did not gain dominance until the latter part of the third century. During this time there were many notable Oneness leaders and teachers who opposed this shift in doctrine. (For support of our assertion that Oneness was the predominant belief during the period immediately following the apostles, see the research paper entitled "Modalistic Monarchianism: Oneness in Early Church History" at the end of this chapter. This paper describes the major Oneness teachers and their doctrine at this period in church history.)

Modalistic Monarchianism

Modalistic monarchianism is the term most often used by church historians to refer to the Oneness view. *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines it as follows:

> "Modalistic monarchianism, conceiving that the whole fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ, took exception to the 'subordination' of some church writers, and maintained that the names Father and Son were only different

designations of the same subject, the one God, who 'with reference to the relations in which He had previously stood to the world is called the Father, but in reference to His appearance in humanity is called the Son.' "[5]

The most prominent modalist leaders were Noetus of Smyrna, Praxeas, and Sabellius. Noetus was Praxeas' teacher in Asia Minor, Praxeas preached in Rome about 190, and Sabellius preached in Rome about 215.[6] Since Sabellius was the best known modalist, historians often call the doctrine Sabellianism. Sabellius relied heavily upon Scripture, especially passages such as Exodus 20:3, Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 44:6, and John 10:38.[7] He said that God revealed Himself as Father in creation, Son in incarnation, and Holy Ghost in regeneration and sanctification. Some interpret this to mean that he believed these three manifestations were strictly successive in time. If so, he does not reflect the beliefs of older modalism or of modern Oneness.

Encyclopedia Britannica describes Sabellius' belief in this way: "His central proposition was to the effect that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the same person, three names thus being attached to one and the same being. What weighed most with Sabellius was the monotheistic interest."[8]

We get much of our information on the modalists from Tertullian (died c. 225), who wrote a treatise against Praxeas. In it he indicated that during his ministry "the majority of believers" adhered to the Oneness doctrine.

"The simple, indeed (I will not call them unwise and unlearned), who always constitute the majority of believers, are startled at the dispensation (of the Three in One), on the very ground that their very Rule of Faith withdraws them from the world's plurality of gods to the one only true God; not understanding that, although He is the one only God, He must yet be believed in with His own economy. The numerical order and distribution of the Trinity, they assume to be a division of the Unity."[9]

Oneness Believers from the Fourth Century to the Present

We have found evidence of many other Oneness believers throughout church history in addition to those described in the research paper presented in this chapter. We feel that the believers we have discovered represent only the tip of the iceberg. Some writers find evidence that the Oneness doctrine existed among the Priscillianists (c. 350 - c. 700), Euchites (c. 350 -c. 900), and Bogomils (c. 900 - c. 1400).[10] It appears that most Oneness believers did not leave a written record. Others had their written works destroyed by victorious opponents. Many were persecuted and martyred, and their movements were destroyed by official Christendom. We do not know how many Oneness believers and movements were not recorded in history, or how many so-called heretics were really Oneness believers. What we find, however, reveals that the Oneness belief survived in spite of its violent opposition.

In the Middle Ages, the prominent scholar and theologian Abelard (1079 - 1142) was accused of teaching Sabellian (Oneness) doctrine.[11] Eventually his enemies forced him to retire from teaching. He sought refuge at a monastery in Cluny, France, and there died.

The Reformation produced many who opposed the doctrine of the trinity in favor of the Oneness belief. One prominent antitrinitarian at the time of the Reformation was Michael Servetus (1511 - 1553), an eminent physician from Spain. He had only a few followers, although some historians consider him to be a motivating force for the development of Unitarianism. However, he definitely was not Unitarian, for he acknowledged Jesus as God. The following description of him clearly indicates he was a true Oneness believer: "The denial by Servetus of the tripersonality of the Godhead and the eternality of the Son, along with his anabaptism, made his system abhorrent to Catholics and Protestants alike, in spite of his intense Biblicism, his passionate devotion to the person of Christ, and his Christocentric scheme of the universe."[12]

Servetus wrote, "There is no other person of God but Christ. . .the entire Godhead of the Father is in him."[13] Servetus went so far as to call the doctrine of the trinity a three-headed monster. He believed it necessarily led to polytheism and was a delusion from the devil. He also believed that because the church accepted trinitarianism, God allowed it to come under the rule of the papacy and so to lose Christ. He could not understand why the Protestants would come out of

Catholicism but still insist upon retaining the nonbiblical and man-made doctrine of the trinity.

Servetus was burned at the stake in 1553 for his Oneness belief, with the approval of John Calvin (although Calvin would have rather had him beheaded).[14]

Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688 - 1772) was a Swedish philosopher and religious writer who expressed a good understanding of the oneness of God. He taught a number of other doctrines that are very different from what we believe, but he did have a revelation of who Jesus really is. He used the term *trinity* but said it was only "three modes of manifestation" and not a trinity of eternal persons. He used Colossians 2:9 to prove that all the "trinity" was in Jesus Christ, and he referred to Isaiah 9:6 and John 10:30 to prove that Jesus was the Father. He denied that the Son was begotten from eternity, holding the view that the Son of God was the humanity by which God sent Himself into the world. He also believed that Jesus was Jehovah God who assumed humanity in order to save mankind. Swedenborg wrote:

> "Whoever does not approach the true God of heaven and earth, cannot have entrance into heaven, because heaven is heaven from that one only God, and that God is Jesus Christ, who is Jehovah the Lord, from eternity the Creator, in time the Redeemer, and to eternity the Regenerator: of consequence, who is at once Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and this is the Gospel which is to be preached."[15]

He saw God (Jesus) as composed of Father, Son, and Spirit just as man is composed of soul, body, and spirit—an analogy not particularly appropriate. However, Swedenborg's explanation of the Godhead is strikingly similar to that of modern Oneness believers.

The nineteenth century saw the emergence of Oneness writers. A Oneness believer in America was a Presbyterian minister named John Miller. In his book, *Is God a Trinity?* written in 1876, he used terminology slightly different from that of modern Oneness writers, but the beliefs he expressed are basically identical to those of Oneness believers today. It is amazing to read his book and see how closely he parallels modern Oneness teaching, including his treatment of Matthew 28:19. Miller believed that the doctrine of the trinity was not biblical and that it greatly hindered the church in reaching out to Jews and Moslems. He emphatically declared the full deity of Jesus Christ.

Oneness believers also existed in nineteenth century England. David Campbell reported finding a book written in 1828 that taught Oneness.[16] The author was John Clowes, pastor of St. John's Church in Manchester.

In the twentieth century, the most significant Oneness force has been the Oneness Pentecostals, although some scholars classify the noted neo-orthodox theologian Karl Barth as modalist (Oneness).[17] Charles Parham, the first leader in the twentieth century Pentecostal movement, began to administer water baptism in Jesus' name, although he apparently did not link this practice with an explicit denial of trinitarianism.[18] After 1913, many Pentecostal rejected trinitarianism and the trinitarian baptismal formula, beginning the modern Oneness Pentecostal movement.

A number of Oneness Pentecostal organizations exist today. The major ones with headquarters in the United States of America are: The United Pentecostal Church International (by far the largest), The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, The Bible Way Churches of Our Lord Jesus Christ World Wide, The Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ, The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, and The Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God. Oneness Pentecostal groups with headquarters in other countries include The United Pentecostal Church of Columbia, an indigenous church and the largest non-Catholic church in the country; The Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, with headquarters in Mexico; the Oneness Pentecostal movement in the U.S.S.R.; and the True Jesus Church, an indigenous church founded by Chinese believers on the mainland but whose headquarters is now in Taiwan. There are many smaller organizations (approximately 130 worldwide), independent churches, and charismatic fellowships that are Oneness Pentecostal in doctrine.

In order to document further some of the statements made in this chapter, we have reproduced below a research paper prepared in 1978 for a religion class at Rice University in Houston, Texas. In particular, note two important conclusions in the first few paragraphs of this paper: 1. Trinitarianism was not solidly established prior to the end of the fourth century; 2. The vast majority of all Christians in the *early post-apostolic church embraced Oneness, and it was the most powerful doctrine to oppose the views of trinitarianism as it gained acceptance among church leaders.*

These conclusions and the information presented in the paper are not merely our own, but we have taken these from noted church historians and other reputable sources listed in the footnotes and bibliography.

MODALISTIC MONARCHIANISM:

ONENESS IN EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

by David Bernard

What is the nature of God? What is the relationship of Jesus Christ to God? These two questions are fundamental to Christianity. The traditional answer of Christendom is given by its doctrine of the trinity. In the first few centuries of Christianity, however, this formulation was by no means the definitive one. In fact, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that in the second century A.D. "a Trinitarian solution was still in the future" and that Trinitarian dogma "was not solidly established. . .prior to the end of the 4th century."[19]

There were many explanations of the nature of God and Christ, several of which enjoyed widespread acceptance. One of the most important of these was *modalistic monarchianism,* which affirmed both the absolute oneness of the Godhead and the divinity of Jesus Christ.

According to the church historian Adolph Harnack, modalistic monarchianism was the most dangerous rival to trinitarianism in the period from 180 A.D. to 300 A.D. He concludes from passages in Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Origen that modalism was the official theory in Rome for almost a generation, and that it was at one time "embraced by the great majority of all Christians."[20]

Despite its evident importance, it is difficult to arrive at a complete description of what modalistic monarchianism really was. Some of the more prominent modalists were Noetus, Praxeas, Sabellius, Epigonus, Cleomenes, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Commodian. At least two Roman bishops (later classified as popes), Callistus and Zephyrinus, were accused of being modalists by their opponents. It is difficult to obtain accurate information about these men and their beliefs because existing historical sources were all written by their trinitarian opponents who were intent upon disproving the doctrine of their antagonists.

Undoubtedly, the modalists' doctrine was misunderstood, misrepresented, and distorted in the process. It is impossible, therefore, to find a precise description of the beliefs of a particular modalist. However, by putting together different statements about these various men, it is possible to arrive at a fairly good understanding of modalism. For example, there were possibly some differences in the theologies of Noetus, Praxeas, Sabellius, and Marcellus; how serious is difficult to determine. It is certain, however, that each maintained the full deity of Jesus Christ while admitting of no distinction of persons in the Godhead.

The modalist doctrine is usually explained simply as the belief that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are only manifestations, or *modes*, of the one God (the *monarchia*), and not three distinct persons *(hypostases)*. It should be distinguished from dynamic monarchianism which also upheld the oneness of God, but did so by claiming that Jesus was an inferior, subordinate being. More precisely, modalistic monarchianism is the belief that considers "Jesus as the incarnation of the Godhead" and "the Father incarnate."[21]

This view has the obvious advantage of upholding the strong Jewish monotheistic tradition while also asserting the early Christian belief in Jesus as God. At the same time it avoids the paradoxes and mysteries of the trinitarian dogma. However, the trinitarians argued that it did not adequately account for the Logos, the pre-existent Christ, or the biblical distinction between the Father and the Son. An analysis of modalism reveals how it answers these objections.

Not only did the modalistic monarchians have a different concept of God from that of the trinitarians, but they also had different definitions of the Logos and the Son. Their basic position was that the Logos (the *Word* in John 1) is not a distinct personal being but is united with God in much the same way as a man and his word. It is a power "indivisible and inseparable from the Father," as Justin Martyr described the belief.[22] For Marcellus, the Logos is God Himself, particularly as thought of in activity.[23] Thus, the trinitarian concept of the Logos as a separate being (based on the philosophy of Philo) was rejected. The modalists accepted the incarnation of the Logos in Christ, but for them that simply meant the extension of the Father in human form.

Closely allied with this idea is the modalistic definition of the Son. They maintained that the Son refers to the Father come in the flesh. Praxeas denied the pre-existence of the Son, using the term *Son* to apply only to the Incarnation.[24] The distinction between the Father and the Son is that *Father* refers to God in Himself, but *Son* refers to the Father as manifested in the flesh (in Jesus). The Spirit in Jesus was the Father, but *Son* refers specifically to the humanity of Jesus as well as deity. Plainly, then, the modalists did not mean that *Father* is interchangeable with *Son* in terminology. Rather, they meant that the two words do not imply separate hypostases (persons) of God but only different modes of the one God.

Putting the two concepts of Logos and Son together, we see how the modalists thought about Jesus. Noetus said that Jesus was the Son by reason of His birth, but He was also the Father.[25] The modalistic Logos doctrine identified the Spirit of Christ as the Father. The Incarnation was like a final theophany in which the Father is fully revealed. However, this was not Docetism (the belief that Jesus was a spirit being only), because both Praxeas and Noetus emphasized Jesus' human nature, especially his human frailties and sufferings. As in trinitarianism, Jesus was "very man and very God"; for the modalists, Jesus was the incarnation of the fulness of the Godhead and not just the incarnation of a separate person called the Son or Logos.

The most common objection made to modalistic monarchianism was that it was Patripassian; that is, it implied that the Father suffered and died. Tertullian was the first to so accuse the modalists. He interpreted modalism to mean that the Father is the same as the Son. But this would mean that the Father died, a clear impossibility. In this way, Tertullian sought to ridicule and refute modalism.

Later historians, taking Tertullian's argument as truth, have labelled the modalist doctrine as Patripassianism. However, there is no record of any modalist stating explicitly that the Father suffered or that the Father died. Sabellius evidently denied the charge of Patripassianism.[26]

The whole issue can easily be resolved by realizing that modalism did not teach, as Tertullian assumed, that the Father *is* the Son, but rather that the Father is *in* the Son. As Commodian said, "The Father went into the Son, one God everywhere."[27] Similarly, Sabellius explained that the Logos was not the Son but was clothed by the Son.[28] Other modalists in response to the charge explained that the Son suffered, while the Father sympathized or "suffered with."[29] By this they meant the Son, the man Jesus, suffered and died. The Father, the Spirit of God within Jesus, could not have suffered or died in any physical sense but yet He must have been affected by or have participated in the suffering of the flesh. Accordingly, Zephyrinus said, "I know only one God, Christ Jesus, and apart from Him no other who was born or could suffer. . . . It was not the Father who died but the Son."[30]

From these statements, it seems clear that the modalists held that the Father was not flesh but was clothed or manifested in the flesh. The flesh died but the eternal Spirit did not. Therefore, Patripassianism is a misleading and inaccurate term to use for modalistic monarchianism.

Basically, then, modalistic monarchianism taught that God has no distinction of number but of name or mode only. The term *Son* refers to the Incarnation. This means that the Son is not an eternal nature, but a mode of God's activity made especially for the purpose of salvation of mankind. There is no pre-existent Son, but one can speak of the pre-existent Christ since the Spirit of Christ is God Himself. The Logos is seen as referring to God's activity. Jesus is therefore the Word or activity of the Father clothed in flesh. The Holy Spirit is not a separate being any more than the Logos. The term *Holy Spirit* describes what God is, and refers to God's power and action in the world. So, both the terms *Logos* and *Holy Spirit* refer to God Himself, in specific modes of activity.

The effect of modalistic monarchianism is to reaffirm the Old Testament concept of one, indivisible God who can and does manifest Himself and His power in many different ways. Furthermore, Jesus Christ is identified as that one God who has manifested Himself through incarnation in a human body. Modalism thus recognizes the full deity of Jesus, much more than trinitarianism does, which is exactly what the modalists claimed.[31] The fulness and completeness of God is in Jesus.

In summary, modalistic monarchianism can be defined as the belief that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are manifestations of the one God with no distinctions of person being possible. Furthermore, the one God is expressed fully in the person of Jesus Christ.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER X

[1] Heick, I, 46-48.

[2] Kenneth Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), p. 143.

[3] Baptism (Early Christian), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 385.

[4] Klotsche, E.H., *The History of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 18.

[5] "Monarchianism," *Encyclopedia Britannica,* XV, 686.

[6] Heick, I, 150.

[7] "Sabellius," *Encyclopedia Britannica,* XIX, 791.

[8] *Loc. cit.*

[9] Tertullian, *Against Praxeas,* 3, rpt. in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), III, 598-599.

[10] Thomas Weisser, *After the Way Called Heresy* (n.p., 1981), p. 115.

[11] Heick, I, 268.

[12] "Servetus, Michael," *Encyclopedia Britannica,* XX, 371-372.

[13] "Unitarianism," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* XII, 520.

[14] Walter Nigg, *The Heretics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), pp. 324-328.

[15] Emmanuel Swedenborg, *The Mystery of God?* (1771; rpt. Portland, Or.: Apostolic Book Publishers, n.d.), p. 29. See Emmanuel Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1907), I, 42.

[16] David Campbell, *All the Fulness* (Hazelwood, Mo.: Word Aflame Press, 1975), pp. 167-173.

[17] Buswell, I, 123.

[18] Fred Foster, *Their Story: 20th Century Pentecostals* (Hazelwood, Mo.: Word Aflame Press, 1981), pp. 120-122, citing Parham, *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness,* pp. 23-24.

[19] "Trinity, Holy," *The New Catholic Encyclopedia,* XIV, 295-305.

[20] Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1897), III, 51-54.

[21] "Monarchianism," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge,* VII, 454-458.

[22] H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), I, 581-584.

[23] J.A. Dorner, *Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870), II, 273.

[24] *Ibid*, II, 20.

[25] Wolfson, I, 591.

[26] "Monarchianism," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, VIII, 780.

[27] Wolfson, I, 583-584.

[28] Dorner, II, 164.

[29] Harnack, III, 68.

[30] Jules Lebreton and Jacques Zeille, *Heresy and Orthodoxy*, Vol. IV of *A History of the Early Church* (New York: Collier, 1962), p. 155.

[31] Harnack, III, 63.

11

TRINITARIANISM: DEFINITION AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

We have tried to present the positive teaching of Scripture regardless of human traditions. However, we cannot cover the subject of the Godhead without describing the historical development of the most widely accepted view in Christendom, the doctrine of the trinity. In this chapter we will define trinitarianism, briefly trace its historical development, and discuss some of the inherent ambiguities in and problems with the doctrine. In Chapter XII, we will draw conclusions about trinitarianism, comparing this doctrine with the teachings of the Bible, pointing out some serious problems with it in light of Bible passages, and contrasting it with Oneness belief.

Definition of the Doctrine of the Trinity

Trinitarianism is the belief that there are three persons in one God. This has been stated in various ways, such as "one God in three Persons"[1] and "three persons in one substance."[2] It holds that in God are three distinctions of essence, not just of activity.[3] The names given to these three persons are God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit).

Orthodox trinitarian doctrine, as it has developed through the centuries, also holds that these three persons are co-equal in power and authority, that they are co-eternal in the past, present, and future, and that in each the same divine nature is fully contained.[4] However, each person is given a unique characteristic when viewed in relation to the others: the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten or generated, and the Spirit is proceeding.[5] Trinitarians sometimes say that the uniqueness of the Father is displayed in creation, that of the Son in redemption, and that of the Spirit in sanctification, yet all three actively share in each work, with varying stress of functions.[6] Since each participates in the work of the others, there is no clear distinction on that basis.

Trinitarians call these three persons the trinity or the triune God. One trinitarian scholar describes the trinity as follows: "The Trinity must be thought of neither as one God in three manifestations nor as a symmetrical triad of persons with separable functions; instead the Trinity signifies one God in three modes of existence—Father, Son, and Spirit, and each of these participates in the activity of the other."[7] Trinitarians frequently use the diagram of a triangle to explain their doctrine. The three corners represent the three members of the trinity, while the complete triangle represents God as the whole trinity. Thus, the Father is not the Son is not the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, neither Father, Son nor Spirit is completely God without the others. (See Chapter XII for a table listing the essential tenets of trinitarianism and comparing them with the essential tenets of Oneness.)

Problems with Tritheism

Orthodox trinitarians deny tritheism, which is the belief in three gods. However, when asked to explain how there can be three distinct persons and yet only one God, they ultimately explain that the trinity is a mystery our finite human minds cannot comprehend fully.[8]

Since trinitarians attempt to reject the concept of three gods, they usually are reluctant to describe God in terms of three beings, personalities, or individuals. One trinitarian stated, "No important Christian theologian has argued that there are three self-conscious beings in the godhead."[9] Another trinitarian writer rejects the idea that the trinity is composed of three individuals, but he does denounce an over-emphasis on oneness, which (he says) leads to a Jewish view of God.[10]

This reluctance to use terms that sharply divide God is commendable; however, *person* is itself such a word. Webster defines *person* as "an individual human being" and "the individual personality of a human being."[11]

This is not just a mere quibble over terminology; for throughout the history of trinitarianism, many trinitarians have interpreted the concept of person practically, and even theologically, to mean three beings. For example, the three Cappadocians of the fourth century (Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus, and Basil of Caesarea) emphasized the threeness of the trinity to the point that they had three personalities.[12] Boethius (c. 480-c. 524) defined *person* as an "individual substance with a rational nature."[13] From medieval times to the present trinitarians have often represented the trinity by a picture of three men, or by a picture of an old man, a young man, and a dove.

Today in trinitarian Pentecostal circles there is a concept of the Godhead that implies outright tritheism. This is evident from the following statements made by three trinitarian Pentecostals—a prominent Bible annotater, a prominent evangelist, and an author.

> "What we mean by Divine Trinity is that there are three separate and distinct persons in the Godhead, each one having His own personal spirit body, personal soul, and personal spirit in the same sense each human being, angel or any other being has his own body, soul, and spirit. . . . Thus there are three separate persons in divine individuality and divine plurality. . . .The word *God* is used either as a singular or a plural word, like *sheep*."[14]

> "Thus there are three separate persons in divine individuality *and* divine plurality. . . .Individually each is called God; collectively they can be spoken of as one God because of their perfect unity. . . .Everything that could pertain to God collectively could also apply equally to each member of the Godhead as individuals. *However, there are some particulars which relate to each individual person of the deity as to position, office, and work that could not be attributed to either of the other members of the Godhead.*"[15]

The third trinitarian Pentecostal, an author, quotes a definition of *person* from *Webster's Dictionary*: "a particular individual." He then gives his own definition: "A person is one who has intellect, sensibility, and will." He attempts to reconcile trinitarian usage of the word *person*.

> "When *person* is applied to any created being, it represents an individual absolutely separate from all others; but when applied to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *person* must be qualified so as to exclude a separate existence, for while the three are distinct, they are inseparable—one God. Nevertheless, with this qualification, *person* remains the term which most nearly enunciates the permanent mode of existence within the Godhead."[16]

It is apparent that many trinitarians interpret their doctrine to mean three personalities, three beings, three minds, three wills, or three bodies in the Godhead. They deny that by *person* they mean only manifestations, roles, or relationships with man. Instead, they defend an eternal threeness of essence while admitting it to be an incomprehensible mystery. They reduce the concept of God's oneness to a unity of plural persons. By their definition, they convert monotheism into a form of polytheism, differing from pagan polytheism only in that there is perfect agreement and unity among the gods. Regardless of trinitarian denials, this *is* polytheism—tritheism to be exact—and not the monotheism taught by the Bible and upheld by Judaism.

Problems with Subordinationism

Trinitarians also deny any form of subordination of one person to another in power or eternality. However, they often say God the Father is the head of the trinity, God the Son is begotten by the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father or Son or both. Again, they insist there is no contradiction, because our finite minds simply cannot comprehend the fulness of meaning described by these relationships.

We find, however, that throughout history prominent trinitarians have interpreted their own doctrine in a way that subordinates Jesus Christ or makes him inferior. Tertullian, the first prominent exponent of trinitarianism, taught that the Son was subordinate to the Father and that the trinity is not eternal.[17] He taught that the Son did not exist as a

separate person in the beginning, but was begotten by the Father to accomplish the creation of the world. Furthermore, Tertullian held that the distinction of persons would cease in the future. Origen, the first great proponent of trinitarianism in the East, also saw the Son as subordinate to the Father in existence and he even maintained that prayer should be addressed to the Father alone.[18] Both men meant the deity of Christ when they used the term *Son*. It can, therefore, be said that trinitarianism began as a doctrine that subordinated Jesus to God.

In modern trinitarian circles, there is a form of subordinationism when trinitarians use the human limitations of Christ to prove a distinction between God the Father and "God the Son" instead of simply a distinction between Christ's divine nature (Father) and His human nature (Son). For example, note their use of Christ's prayers, lack of knowledge, and lack of power to prove "God the Son" is different from God the Father. Even while asserting the co-equality of the Son and the Father, they often deny it in a practical way and confess they do not understand what it really means.

Oneness believers state that the Son was subordinate to the Father. However, they do not believe that Jesus is subordinate to the Father in the sense trinitarians do. Rather, they mean that Jesus in His human role as the Son was subordinate and limited, but Jesus in His divine role as the Father was not subordinate or limited. In other words, the human nature of Jesus was subordinate to the divine nature of Jesus. By separating Father and Son into separate persons, trinitarians deny that Jesus is the Father, thereby inevitably detracting from the full deity of Jesus. Despite their denials, in effect their doctrine subordinates Jesus to the Father in deity.

Nonbiblical Terminology

There are severe problems with trinitarian terminology. First, the Bible nowhere uses the word *trinity.* The word *three* does not appear in relation to God in any translation of the Bible except the *King James Version,* and only once in that translation—in the doubtful verse of I John 5:7. Even this passage reads, "these three are one."

The word *person* does not appear in relation to God either, except one time in the *King James Version* (Hebrews 1:3) where it means God's nature or substance. The Bible never uses the plural word *persons* to describe God. (The only possible exception would be Job 13:10: "He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons"—but this verse obviously demolishes trinitarianism if it applies to God!)

In short, as many trinitarian scholars admit, the Bible does not explicitly express the doctrine of the trinity. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* states: "There is the recognition on the part of exegetes and Biblical theologians. . .that one should not speak of Trinitarianism in the New Testament without serious qualifications. . . .New Testament exegesis is now accepted as having shown that not only the verbal idiom but even the patterns of thought

characteristic of the patristic [church fathers] and concilian [church councils] development would have been quite foreign to the mind and culture of the New Testament writers."[19]

The trinitarian Protestant theologian Emil Brunner has stated, "The doctrine of the Trinity itself, however, is not a Biblical doctrine and this indeed not by accident but of necessity. It is the product of theological reflection upon the problem. . . .The ecclesiastical doctrine of the Trinity is not only the product of genuine Biblical thought, it is also the product of philosophical speculation, which is remote from the thought of the Bible."[20]

Historical Development of Trinitarianism

If trinitarianism does not come from the Bible, where did it originate? There is no question that Christian trinitarianism developed over several centuries of time after the New Testament was written. According to *The New Catholic Encyclopedia,* historians of dogma and systematic theologians recognize "that when one does speak of an unqualified Trinitarianism, one has moved from the period of Christian origins to, say, the last quadrant of the 4th century. . . .From what has been seen thus far, the impression could arise that the Trinitarian dogma is in the last analysis a late 4th century invention. In a sense, this is true but it implies an extremely strict interpretation of the key words Trinitarian and dogma. . . .The formulation 'one God in three Persons' was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life, and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title *the Trinitarian dogma*."[21]

We will briefly trace the historical development of this doctrine in Christendom, but first let us explore some pagan origins of trinitarianism.

Pagan Origins

Trinitarian scholar Alexander Hislop asserts that the Babylonians worshiped one God in three persons and used the equilateral triangle as a symbol of this trinity. In his book, Hislop shows pictures used in ancient Assyria and in Siberia to represent triune divinities. He further traces trinitarian ideas to the Babylonian cult of the father, mother, and child, saying that the Babylonian trinity was "the Eternal Father, the Spirit of God incarnate in a human mother, and a Divine Son, the fruit of that incarnation."[22]

Historian Will Durant describes the trinity in ancient Egypt. "Ra, Amon, and another god, Ptah, were combined as three embodiments or aspects of one supreme and triune deity."[23] Egypt also had a divine trinity of father, mother, and son in Osiris, Isis, and Horus.[24]

Trinities exist in other important pagan religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Hinduism has had a supreme trinity from ancient times: Brahma the Creator, Shiva the Destroyer, and Vishnu the Preserver. One scholar described the belief: "Brahman-Atman, the impersonal ultimate reality achieves a religiously significant threefold manifestation or trimurti [triad of gods] through the three personal deities who represent the divine functions of creation, destruction, and preservation respectively."[25] This trinity is sometimes represented by a statue of one god with three heads.

Buddhism also has a trinity of sorts. The Mahayana (northern) school of Buddhism has the doctrine of a "triple body" or Trikaya.[26] According to this belief there are three "bodies" of the Buddha-reality. The first is the eternal, cosmical reality, the second is the heavenly manifestation of the first, and the third is the earthly manifestation of the second. Furthermore, many Buddhists worship three-headed statues of Buddha.[27]

Taoism, the ancient mystical religion of China, has an official trinity of supreme gods—the Jade Emperor, Lao Tzu, and Ling Pao—called the Three Purities.[28]

A philosophic trinity apears in Plato and becomes very significant in Neo-Platonism.[29] Of course, Greek philosophy, particularly Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought, had a major influence on the theology of the ancient church. For example, the trinitarian Logos doctrine stems from the Neo-Platonic philosopher Philo. (See Chapter IV.) Thus, we can see that the idea of a trinity did not originate with Christendom, but that it is a significant feature of many ancient pagan religions and philosophies before the Christian era.

Post-apostolic Developments

The Scriptures do not teach the doctrine of the trinity, but trinitarianism has its roots in paganism. How, then, did this pagan doctrine find its way into Christendom? For an answer to this question, we have relied primarily on Lutheran seminary professors Otto Heick and E. H. Klotsche, Yale University professor of church history Roland Bainton, university professor John Noss, noted philosopher-historian Will Durant, and the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.*

In chapter X, we noted that the early post-apostolic fathers (90 - 140 A.D.) did not embrace the idea of a trinity. On the contrary, they emphasized Old Testament monotheism, the deity of Christ, and the humanity of Christ. The Greek apologists (130 - 180 A.D.) also emphasized the oneness of God. However, some of them moved towards trinitarianism.

This trend toward trinitarianism began by making the Logos (the Word of John 1) a separate person. Following a thought in Greek philosophy, particularly in the teachings of Philo, some of the Greek apologists began to view the Logos as a separate person from the Father. This was not trinitarianism, however, but a form of binitarianism, and one that subordinated the Logos to the Father. To them the Father alone was the real God and the Logos was a created divine being of second rank. Eventually, the Logos became equated with the Son. Apparently, the triune baptismal formula became a practice among some Christian churches, although the few early references to it may be either recitations of Matthew 28:19 or interpolations added by later copyists. Moreover, during this time, an apologist named Theophilus used the word *triad (triados)* to describe God. However, he probably did not use it to signify a trinity of persons but rather a triad of God's activities.

Irenaeus (died c. 200) is often considered the first true theologian of this time.[30] He emphasized the manifestation of God in Christ for the sake of redemption. Some scholars have characterized Irenaeus' beliefs as "economic trinitarianism." By this they mean he did not believe in an eternal trinity or a trinity of essence but only a trinity that is temporary in nature—probably a trinity of God's activity or operations only. Irenaeus, who did not use the Greek Logos doctrine, identified the Logos with the Father. His theology had three key characteristics: a strong biblical emphasis, a reverence for apostolic tradition, and a strong Christocentric emphasis. It seems he was not a trinitarian but a Oneness believer. (See Chapter X.)

In summary, in the first century after the apostles, the doctrine of the trinity had not even developed. However, in some circles a form of subordinationistic binitarianism emerged based on Greek philosophical ideas, a doctrine denounced in the first chapter of John's Gospel. (See Chapter IV.) *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* says of trinitarianism at this time in church history: "Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective; among the second century Apologists, little more than a focusing of the problem as that of plurality within the unique Godhead. . . In the last analysis, the second century theological achievement was limited. . .A trinitarian solution was still in the future."[31]

Tertullian—the Father Of Christian Trinitarianism

Tertullian (c. 150 - c. 225 A.D.) was the first person recorded by history to use the words *trinity* (Latin: *trinitas), substance (substantia),* and *person (persona)* in relation to God.[32] He was the first to speak of three persons in one substance (Latin: *una substantia et tres personae).* Tertullian adhered to the economic conception of the trinity. That is, he believed that the trinity exists for the purpose of revelation only, and after this has been accomplished the distinctions between the persons will cease. However, he definitely differed from Irenaeus in that he used the Logos doctrine of the Greek apologists. Tertullian equated the Logos with the Son. He believed the Father brought the Logos into existence for the creation of the world and the Logos was subordinate to the Father. The doctrine of the trinity posed no problem for Tertullian, for his whole theology rested on the thought that the more impossible the object of faith is, the more certain it is. He has been characterized by the statement, "I believe because it is absurd."

There is some question as to what Tertullian actually meant by his trinitarian formulation, especially his use of the Latin word *persona.* According to a handbook of theological terms, in Roman law the word meant a legal entity or party.[33] In drama it

meant a mask worn by an actor or, by extension, a role played by an actor. Neither usage necessarily indicates the modern meaning of person as a self-conscious being. For example, one actor could play several roles *(personae)* and one legal corporation *(persona)* could consist of several individuals. On the other hand, presumably the word could also designate individual human beings.

In the fourth century, the Greek word *hypostasis* was used in the official formulation of trinitarian doctrine. According to Noss, *hypostasis* was an abstract word meaning subsistence or individualized manifestation. He says, "When this formulation was translated into Latin, the rather abstract Greek for *individualized manifestation* became the rather concrete word *persona,* and connotations of distinct and self-contained personality were suggested in a way not intended by the original Greek wording."[34] However, this concrete Latin word was precisely the one Tertullian had used earlier. Another scholar states that by the time *hypostasis* was translated into *persona* the two words were basically equivalent, both meaning "individual being."[35]

It is apparent that many people in Tertullian's time opposed his new formulation. By his own admission the majority of believers in his day rejected his doctrine on two grounds: Their Rule of Faith (early creed or statement of belief) prohibited polytheism, and his doctrine divided the unity of God.[36] Our knowledge of the early modalist (Oneness) believers, Noetus and Praxeas, comes from their strong opposition to Tertullian and his strong opposition to them. If Tertullian meant only that God had three roles, masks, or manifestations, there would be no conflict with modalism, especially since Tertullian did not believe in an eternal trinity. Therefore, we conclude that Tertullian did mean three essential differences in God and that *persona* did connote or imply a distinct personality, as suggested by Noss. In any case, it is clear that in Tertullian's day Oneness believers saw his doctrine as sharply opposed to their own, which was the majority belief of the time.

Here is one final note on Tertullian. He became a follower of Montanus, an early heretic who claimed to be the Paraclete (Comforter) promised in John 14 and the last prophet before the end of the world. Tertullian eventually began to praise celibacy and condemn marriage. In the end, he was excommunicated along with the rest of the Montanists.

Other Early Trinitarians

Tertullian introduced the terminology of trinitarianism and became its first great proponent in the West, but Origen (died 254) became its first great proponent in the East.[37] Origen attempted to fuse Greek philosophy and Christianity into a system of higher knowledge that historians often describe as Christian Gnosticism. He accepted the Greek Logos doctrine (namely that the Logos was a person separate from the Father), but he added a unique feature not proposed until his time. This was the doctrine of the eternal Son. He taught that the Son or Logos was a separate person from all eternity. Furthermore, he said

the Son was begotten from all eternity and is eternally being begotten. He retained a subordination of the Son to the Father in existence or origin, but moved closer to the later doctrine of co-equality.

Origen had many heretical beliefs due to his acceptance of doctrines from Greek philosophy, his emphasis on mystical knowledge rather than faith, and his extremely allegorical interpretation of Scripture. For example, he believed in the pre-existence of the souls of men, denied the necessity of the redemptive work of Christ, and believed in the ultimate salvation of the wicked, including the devil. For these and other heretical doctrines, he was excommunicated from the church. Church councils formally anathematized (cursed) many of his doctrines in 543 and 553.

Other prominent trinitarians in early church history were Hippolytus and Novatian. Hippolytus was the trinitarian opponent of Sabellius. He opposed Callistus, bishop of Rome, and headed a schismatic group against him. Despite this, the Catholic Church later sainted him.

Novatian was one of the first to emphasize the Holy Spirit as a third person. He taught subordination of the Son to the Father, saying the Son was a separate person, but had a beginning and came from the Father. Cornelius, bishop of Rome, excommunicated Novatian for believing that a number of serious sins could not be forgiven if committed after conversion.

The Council of Nicea

By the end of the third century, trinitarianism had replaced modalism (Oneness) as the belief held by most of Christendom, although the early views of trinitarianism were not yet in the form of the modern doctrine.

During the early part of the fourth century, a great controversy about the Godhead came to a climax—the clash between the teachings of Athanasius and Arius. Arius wished to preserve the oneness of God and yet proclaim the independent personality of the Logos. Like the trinitarians, he equated the Logos with the Son and with Christ. He taught that Christ is a created being—a divine being but not of the same essence as the Father and not co-equal with the Father. In other words, to him Christ is a demigod.

In effect, Arius taught a new form of polytheism. Arius was definitely not a Oneness believer, and the modern Oneness movement strongly rejects any form of Arianism.

In opposition to Arius, Athanasius took the position that the Son is co-equal, co-eternal, and of co-essence with the Father. This is now the view of modern trinitarianism. Therefore, while Tertullian introduced many trinitarian concepts and terms to Christendom, Athanasius can be considered the true father of modern trinitarianism.

When the Arian-Athanasian controversy began to sweep across the Roman Empire, Emperor Constantine decided to intervene. Recently converted to Christianity and then making it the accepted religion, he felt the need to protect the unity of Christendom for the welfare of the empire. According to tradition his conversion came as the result of a vision he saw just prior to a crucial battle. Supposedly, he saw a cross in the sky with a message saying, "In this sign conquer." He went on to win the battle, becoming co-emperor in 312 A.D. and sole emperor in 324 A.D. When the great Arian-Athanasian controversy threatened to divide his newly won empire and destroy his plan to use Christianity in consolidating and maintaining political power, he convened the first ecumenical council of the church, which took place at Nicea in 325 A.D.

Constantine was no paragon of Christianity. In 326 he killed his son, nephew, and wife. He purposely deferred baptism until shortly before death, on the theory that he would thereby be cleansed of all the sins of his life. Durant says of him, "Christianity was to him a means, but not an end. . . .While Christianity converted the world, the world converted Christianity and displayed the natural paganism of mankind."[38]

By establishing Christianity as the preferred religion of the Roman Empire (which ultimately led to it becoming the official state religion), Constantine radically altered the church and accelerated its acceptance of pagan rituals and heretical doctrines. As church historian Walter Nigg says, "As soon as Emperor Constantine opened the floodgates and the masses of the people poured into the Church out of sheer opportunism, the loftiness of the Christian ethos was done for."[39]

When the Council of Nicea convened, Constantine was not interested in any particular outcome, as long as the participants reached agreement. Once this occurred, Constantine threw his power behind the result.

> "Constantine, who treated religious questions solely from a political point of view, assured unanimity by banishing all the bishops who would not sign the new professions of faith. In this way unity was achieved. It was altogether unheardof that a universal creed should be instituted solely on the authority of the emperor. . . .Not a bishop said a single word against this monstrous thing."[40]

Heick divides the participants at Nicea into three groups: a minority of Arians, a minority of Athanasians, and a majority who did not understand the conflict but wanted peace.[41] The Council finally adopted a creed that clearly denounced Arianism but said little in the way of positive trinitarian teaching. The key phrase stated that Christ was of the same essence (Greek: *homoousios)* as the Father and not just of like essence *(homoiousios).* Interestingly enough, the modalists (Oneness believers) had first used the chosen word *(homoousios)* to express the identity of Jesus with the Father. Many who unsuccessfully advocated the use of the latter term *(homoiousios)* did not really mean that Jesus was different from the Father in substance, but rather they wanted to avoid the Oneness implications of the former term. So the resulting creed was a clear rejection of Arianism, but a not-so-clear rejection of modalism (Oneness).

The original version of the Nicene Creed formulated by the Council of Nicea in relation to the Godhead is as follows:

> "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, i.e., of the nature of the Father. God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, both things in heaven and things on earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh and assumed man's nature, suffered and rose the third day, ascended to heaven, (and) shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. But the holy and apostolic church anathematizes those who say that there was a time when he was not, and that he was made from things not existing, or from another person or being, saying that the Son of God is mutable, or changeable."[42]

There is no clear statement of the trinity in this creed, but it does affirm that Jesus is of one substance with the Father in opposition to Arianism. There is no reference to the Holy Ghost as a separate person in the Godhead, but it merely expresses a belief in the Holy Ghost. This original Nicene Creed indicates a personal distinction between Father and Son and states that the Son is not mutable or changeable. This last phrase is a departure from the biblical doctrine of the Son and supports modern trinitarianism since it teaches an eternal Son. Basically, then, the Council of Nicea has a threefold significance: it is a rejection of Arianism; it is the first official declaration incompatible with modalism (Oneness); and it is the first official declaration supporting trinitarianism.

After Nicea

The trinitarian victory of Nicea was not complete, however. The next sixty years were a seesaw battle between the Arians and the Athanasians. Some participants in the council such as Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra, even came out in favor of Sabellianism (Oneness).[43] Arius sent a conciliatory letter to Constantine, which caused him to reopen the issue. A council held in Tyre in 335 actually reversed the Nicene doctrine in favor of Arianism. Athanasius went into exile, and Arius would have been reinstated as a bishop had he not died the previous night.[44]

Athanasius was banished five or six times during this period. Much of the conflict was due to political circumstances. For example, when Constantine's son Constantius came to power he backed the Arians, deposing Athanasian bishops and appointing Arians in their place. The controversy produced vicious political infighting and much bloodshed.

Professor Heick credits the ultimate success of Athanasianism to the eloquence and perseverance of Athanasius himself. "The decisive factor in the victory. . .was the unfaltering determination of Athanasius during a long life of persecution and oppression."[45] It was not, however, until the second ecumenical council, called by Emperor Theodosius and held at Constantinople in 381, that the issue was resolved. This council, held after the death of Athanasius, ratified the Nicene Creed. It also settled another great issue that had been raging after Nicea, namely the relation of the Holy Spirit to God. Was the Holy Spirit a separate person in the Godhead or not? Many thought the Spirit was an energy, a creature, or an angelic being. The council added statements to the original Nicene Creed to teach that the Holy Spirit was a separate person like the Father and the Son.

It was not until the Council of Constantinople in 381, then, that the modern doctrine of the trinity gained permanent victory. That council was the first to state unequivocally that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were three separate persons of God, co-equal, co-eternal, and of co-essence. A revised Nicene Creed came from the council in 381. The present form of the Nicene Creed, which probably emerged around the year 500,[46] is therefore more strongly trinitarian than the original Nicene Creed.

There was one other great threat to Athanasianism. The Roman Empire had begun to crumble under barbarian attacks, and the barbarian tribes on the rise to ascendancy were Arian. Conceivably, Arianism could have emerged victorious through the barbarian conquests. This threat finally ended, however, when the Franks converted to Athanasianism in 496.

During this time period, one other important creed emerged—the Athanasian Creed, which did *not* come from Athanasius. It probably represents the trinitarian doctrine of Augustine (354-430), for it developed during or after his time. This creed is the most comprehensive statement of trinitarianism in ancient church history. Only the western part of Christendom officially recognized it.

The main points of difference between East and West on the doctrine of the trinity were as follows. First, the East tended to emphasize the threeness of God. For example, to the Cappadocians the great mystery was how the three persons could be one. In the West there was a little more emphasis on the unity of God. Second, the West believed that the Spirit proceeded from the Father and from the Son (the *filioque* doctrine), while the East held that the Spirit proceeded from the Father only. This ultimately became a major doctrinal issue behind the schism between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy in 1054.

The Athanasian Creed

In order to give the reader a more complete view of the doctrine of the trinity, a part of the Athanasian Creed is given below:

> "Whoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith: Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he will perish everlastingly. And The Catholic Faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity. Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son,

another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: The Glory co-equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost: The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals: but one Eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated: but one Uncreated and one Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty. And yet they are not three almighties: but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three gods: but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three lords: but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord: So are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say, there be three gods, or three lords. The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three

Fathers, one Son, not three Sons, and one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is the greater or less than another. But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved: must thus think of the Trinity. . . ."[47]

The Apostles' Creed

Before we close this chapter, we need to answer questions about the so-called Apostles' Creed. Did it originate with the Apostles? Does it teach trinitarianism? The answer to both questions is no. This creed had its beginnings in a more ancient confession of faith used in the Roman church. It was called the Old Roman Symbol (or Creed). Various scholars have dated the Old Roman Symbol anywhere from 100 to 200 A.D. It says:

> "I believe in God the Father Almighty. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was born by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary; Was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried; The third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body (flesh)."[48]

This creed was revised to meet the challenge of new doctrinal issues, until it finally achieved its present form near the end of the fifth century. The most important changes were additions affirming the following: God is the maker of heaven and earth; Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost; Jesus suffered and died; Jesus descended into hell (the grave); belief in the holy catholic (general) church; belief in the communion of saints; and belief in the life everlasting.

There are two important things about the original and later versions. First, neither has a direct historical link with the twelve apostles. Therefore the versions are no more sacred or trustworthy than any other writings from the first few centuries after the time of the apostles. Second, they do not teach the trinitarian doctrine. For the most part they follow biblical language very closely. They describe the Son of God only in terms of the Incarnation, nowhere hinting that the Son is a separate person in the Godhead or that the Son is eternal. They affirm belief in the Holy Ghost, but not as a separate person of the Godhead. Instead they place this affirmation together with other statements relating to salvation, leading us to believe that they are talking about the gift or baptism of the Holy Ghost and to the working of the Holy Ghost in the church. Thus, there is nothing really objectionable in the language if we define the terms in the same way the Bible uses them.

However, trinitarians have reinterpreted the Apostles' Creed, claiming that it supports their doctrine. Roman Catholics and Protestants both use it today to declare their trinitarian belief. They have associated it with trinitarianism to such a degree that nontrinitarians do not use it for fear of being misunderstood.

We do not advocate the use of the Apostles' Creed for the following reasons. 1. It did *not* originate with the apostles as its name implies. We do not want to create a false impression among people by using that title. 2. It does not necessarily emphasize all the important themes of the New Testament, especially some aspects which are important to emphasize today in light of false doctrines developed over the centuries. 3. Instead of trying to formulate a creed that comprehensively states doctrine in a binding way, we prefer to use the Bible itself for summary statements of doctrine. 4. Use of this creed today would associate us with trinitarianism. Even though the writers did not have that doctrine in mind, the vast majority of ordinary people today would consider it to be a trinitarian statement. To avoid identification with trinitarianism and Roman Catholicism, we do not use the Apostles' Creed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we see that the doctrine of the trinity is nonbiblical both in terminology and in historical origin. It has its roots in polytheism, pagan religion, and pagan philosophy. The doctrine itself did not exist in church history before the third century. Even at that time, early trinitarians did not accept many basic doctrines of present day trinitarianism such as the co-equality and co-eternality of Father and

Son. Trinitarianism did not achieve dominance over Oneness belief until around 300. It did not achieve victory over Arianism until the late 300's.

The first official recognition of trinitarian doctrines came at the Council of Nicea in 325, but even this was incomplete. Full establishment of the doctrine did not come until the Council of Constantinople in 381. In short, trinitarianism did not achieve its present form until the end of the fourth century, and its definitive creeds did not take final form until the fifth century.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XI

[1] "Trinity, Holy," p. 295.

[2] Van Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms* (New York: MacMillan, 1964), p. 244.

[3] *Ibid;* William Stevens, *Doctrines of the Christian Religion* (Nashville: Broadman, 1967), p. 119.

[4] Harvey, p. 245.

[5] Heick, I, 160; "Trinity," pp. 459-460.

[6] "Trinity," p. 460.

[7] Bloesch, I, 35.

[8] Heick, I, 160; Stevens, p. 119; "Trinity, Holy," p. 295.

[9] Harvey, p. 246. See also, "Trinity," p. 460.

[10] Stevens, p. 119.

[11] *Webster's,* p. 1686.

[12] Heick, I, 161.

[13] Harvey, p. 182.

[14] Finis Dake, *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible* (Lawrenceville, Ga.: Dake's Bible Sales, 1963), NT, 280. Emphasis in original.

[15] Jimmy Swaggart, "The Error of the 'Jesus Only' Doctrine," *The Evangelist,* April, 1981, p. 6. Emphasis in original.

[16] Carl Brumback, *God in Three Persons* (Cleveland, Tenn.: Pathway Press, 1959), pp. 60-63.

[17] Heick, I, 127.

[18] Heick, I, 117-118.

[19] "Trinity, Holy," pp. 295-305.

[20] Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), pp. 236-239.

[21] "Trinity, Holy," pp. 295-305.

[22] Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons,* 2nd ed. (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Bros., 1959), pp. 16-19.

[23] Will and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1935), I, 201.

[24] "Trinity," p. 458.

[25] John Noss, *Man's Religions,* 5th ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1969), p. 202.

[26] *Ibid,* p. 163.

[27] Hislop, p. 18.

[28] Noss, p. 268.

[29] "Trinity," p. 458.

[30] Heick, I, 107-110.

[31] "Trinity, Holy," pp. 295-305.

[32] Heick, I, 123-129.

[33] Harvey, pp. 181-182.

[34] Noss, p. 453.

[35] Harvey, p. 123.

[36] Tertullian, *Against Praxeas,* 3.

[37] Heick, I, 112-123.

[38] Durant, III (1944), 653-664.

[39] Nigg, p. 102.

[40] *Ibid,* pp. 126-127.

[41] Heick, I, 156.

[42] Reinhold Seeburg, *Textbook of the History of Doctrines,* trans. Charles Hay (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954), I, 216-217.

[43] Klotsche, p. 67.

[44] Roland Bainton, *Early Christianity* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1960), pp. 68-70.

[45] Heick, I, 157.

[46] *Ibid,* I, 163.

[47] *See,* Anne Fremantle, ed., *A Treasury of Early Christianity* (New York: Mentor Books, 1953); Seeburg, I, 240-243.

[48] Heick, I, 88. *See,* Tim Dowley, et al., eds. *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 145.

12

TRINITARIANISM: AN EVALUATION

In the last chapter we attempted to give an honest presentation of the doctrine of the trinity and a factual account of its historical development. We also discussed some inherent problems in the doctrine. We concluded that trinitarianism uses nonbiblical terms and that it achieved its present formulation and dominance in the fourth century. Despite this, one may ask if trinitarianism is at least consistent with the Bible. In this chapter we assert that the doctrine of the trinity conflicts with the biblical doctrine of one God.

Nonbiblical Terminology

As discussed in Chapter XI, the terminology of trinitarianism is not biblical. The Bible does not mention the word *trinity* nor does it mention the word *persons* in reference to God. The Bible does not even relate the words *person* and *three* to God in any significant way.

Nonbiblical terminology in and of itself does not mean that a doctrine described by it is necessarily false, but it does cast considerable doubt on the matter. This is especially true when the nonbiblical terminology is not merely a replacement for biblical terminology, but instead it teaches new concepts. In short, nonbiblical terminology is dangerous if it leads to nonbiblical ways of thinking and eventually to nonbiblical doctrines. Trinitarianism certainly has this problem.

Person and Persons

Speaking of God as a person does not do justice to Him. The word *person* connotes a human being with a human personality—an individual with body, soul, and spirit. Thus, we limit our conception of God if we describe Him as a person. For this reason, this book has never said there is one person in the Godhead or God is one person. The most we have said is that Jesus Christ is one person, because Jesus was God manifested in flesh as a human person.

Speaking of God as a plurality of persons further violates the biblical concept of God. Regardless of what *persons* meant in ancient church history, today the word definitely connotes a plurality of individuals, personalities, minds, wills and bodies. Even in ancient church history, we have shown that the vast majority of believers saw it as a departure from biblical monotheism.

Three

The use of the number three in relation to God is also dangerous. If used to designate eternal distinctions in God, it leads to tritheism, which is a form of polytheism. If used to designate the only manifestations or roles God has, it limits God's activity in a way not done in Scripture. God has manifested Himself in numerous ways, and we cannot even limit them to three. (See Chapter VI.) The use of *three* goes against the clear emphasis both testaments place on associating the number one with God.

Tritheism

Despite the protests of trinitarians, their doctrine inevitably leads to a practical form of tritheism. (See Chapter XI.) The Jews and Moslems realize this, for this is one reason they have rejected traditional Christendom so vigorously. Throughout history, many Christians have also recognized this problem. As a result, some have rejected trinitarianism in favor of Oneness belief. (See Chapter X.) Others have seen the errors of trinitarianism, but, in an attempt to preserve the unity of God, have fallen into the greater error of denying the deity of Jesus Christ (for example, the Unitarians and the Jehovah's Witnesses). In short, trinitarianism emphasizes threeness in God while the Bible emphasizes the oneness of God. (See Chapter I.)

Mystery

Trinitarians universally describe their doctrine as

a mystery. As discussed in Chapter IV, however, the only mystery relative to the Godhead is the manifestation of God in flesh, and even that has been revealed to those who believe. A mystery in Scripture is a divine truth previously unknown but now revealed to man.

Certainly our finite minds cannot understand all there is to know about God but we can understand the simple truth that there is one God. God may transcend human logic, but He never contradicts true logic, nor is He illogical. He emphasizes His oneness so strongly in the Bible that He has dispelled any possible confusion or mystery on this issue.

The Bible never says that the Godhead is an unrevealed mystery or that the question of plurality in the Godhead is a mystery. Instead, it affirms in the strongest terms that God is one. Why resort to an explanation that the Godhead is an incomprehensible mystery in order to protect a man-made doctrine with nonbiblical terminology when the Scriptures plainly give us a simple, unambiguous message that God is absolutely one? It is wrong to state that the Godhead is a mystery when the Bible clearly states that God has revealed the mystery to us. (See Chapter IV.)

The Deity of Jesus Christ

Trinitarianism affirms the deity of Christ. However, it detracts from the fulness of Christ's deity as described in the Bible. As a practical matter, trinitarianism denies that the fulness of the Godhead is in Jesus because it denies that Jesus is the Father and the Holy Spirit. (See Chapter XI.) It does not exalt the name and the person of Jesus sufficiently or give Him the full recognition that the Bible gives Him.

Contradictions

The basic problem is that trinitarianism is a nonbiblical doctrine that contradicts a number of biblical teachings and many specific verses of Scripture. Moreover, the doctrine contains a number of internal contradictions. Of course, the most obvious internal contradiction is how there can be three persons of God in any meaningful sense and yet there be only one God.

Below we have compiled a number of other contradictions and problems associated with trinitarianism. This list is not exhaustive but it does give an idea of how much the doctrine deviates from the Bible.

1. Did Jesus Christ have two fathers? The Father is the Father of the Son (I John 1:3), yet the child born of Mary was conceived by the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). Which one is the true father? Some trinitarians say that the Holy Ghost was merely the Father's agent in conception—a process they compare to artificial insemination!!

2. How many Spirits are there? God the Father is a Spirit (John 4:24), the Lord Jesus is a Spirit (II Corinthians 3:17), and the Holy Spirit is a Spirit by definition. Yet there is one Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4).

3. If Father and Son are co-equal persons, why did Jesus pray to the Father? (Matthew 11:25). Can God pray to God?

4. Similarly, how can the Son not know as much as the Father? (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32).

5. Similarly, how can the Son not have any power except what the Father gives Him? (John 5:19, 30; 6:38).

6. Similarly, what about other verses of Scripture indicating the inequality of the Son and the Father? (John 8:42; 14:28; I Corinthians 11:3).

7. Did "God the Son" die? The Bible says the Son died (Romans 5:10). If so, can God die? Can part of God die?

8. How can there be an eternal Son when the Bible speaks of the *begotten* Son, clearly indicating that the Son had a beginning? (John 3:16; Hebrews 1:5-6).

9. If the Son is eternal and existed at creation, who was His mother at that time? We know the Son was made of a woman (Galatians 4:4).

10. Did "God the Son" surrender His omnipresence while on earth? If so, how could he still be God?

11. If the Son is eternal and immutable (unchangeable), how can the reign of the Son have an ending? (I Corinthians 15:24-28).

12. If in answer to questions 3 through 11 we say only the human Son of God was limited in knowledge, was limited in power, and died, then how can we speak of "God the Son"? Are there two Sons?

13. Whom do we worship and to whom do we pray? Jesus said to worship the Father (John 4:21-24), yet Stephen prayed to Jesus (Acts 7:59-60).

14. Can there be more than three persons in the Godhead? Certainly the Old Testament does not teach three but emphasizes oneness. If the New Testament adds to the Old Testament message and teaches three persons, then what is to prevent subsequent revelations of additional persons? If we apply trinitarian logic to interpret some verses of Scripture, we could teach a fourth person (Isaiah 48:16; Colossians 1:3; 2:2; I Thessalonians 3:11; James 1:27). Likewise, we could interpret some verses of Scripture to mean six more persons (Revelation 3:1; 5:6).

15. Are there three Spirits in a Christian's heart? Father, Jesus, and the Spirit all dwell within a Christian (John 14:17, 23; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 3:14-17). Yet there is one Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4).

16. There is only one throne in heaven (Revelation 4:2). Who sits upon it? We know Jesus does (Revelation 1:8, 18, 4:8). Where do the Father and the Holy Spirit sit?

17. If Jesus is on the throne, how can He sit on the right hand of God? (Mark 16:19). Does He sit or stand on the right hand of God? (Acts 7:55). Or is He in the Father's bosom? (John 1:18).

18. Is Jesus in the Godhead or is the Godhead in Jesus? Colossians 2:9 says the latter.

19. Given Matthew 28:19, why did the apostles consistently baptize both Jews and Gentiles using the name of Jesus, even to the extent of rebaptism? (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; I Corinthians 1:13).

20. Who raised Jesus from the dead? Did the Father (Ephesians 1:20), or Jesus (John 2:19-21), or the Spirit? (Romans 8:11).

21. If Son and Holy Ghost are co-equal persons in the Godhead, why is blasphemy of the Holy Ghost unforgiveable but blasphemy of the Son is not? (Luke 12:10).

22. If the Holy Ghost is a co-equal member of the trinity, why does the Bible always speak of Him being sent from the Father or from Jesus? (John 14:26; 15:26).

23. Does the Father know something that the Holy Spirit does not know? If so, how can they be co-equal? Only the Father knows the day and hour of the Second Coming of Christ (Mark 13:32).

24. Did the trinity make the Old and New covenants? We know the LORD (Jehovah) did (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13). If Jehovah is a trinity then Father, Son, and Spirit all had to die to make the new covenant effective (Hebrews 9:16-17).

25. If the Spirit proceeds from the Father, is the Spirit also a son of the Father? If not, why not?

26. If the Spirit proceeds from the Son, is the Spirit the grandson of the Father? If not, why not?

Evaluation of Trinitarianism

We believe that trinitarianism is not a biblical doctrine and that it contradicts the Bible in many ways. The Scriptures do not teach a trinity of persons. The doctrine of the trinity uses terminology not used in Scripture. It teaches and emphasizes plurality in the Godhead while the Bible emphasizes the oneness of God. It detracts from the fulness of Jesus Christ's deity. It contradicts many specific verses of Scripture. It is not logical. No one can understand or explain it rationally, not even those who advocate it. In short, trinitarianism is a doctrine that does not belong to Christianity.

The Doctrine of the Trinity Contrasted with Oneness

In order to understand clearly how trinitarianism differs from the Bible's teaching on the Godhead, we have prepared a contrasting table. The left side lists the essential teachings of trinitarianism. The right side lists the teachings of Oneness or Christian monotheism. We believe that the right side reflects the Bible's teachings, and this is the system of belief we have tried to present throughout the book.

Trinitarianism and Oneness Compared

Trinitarianism	Oneness
1. There are three persons in one God. That is, there are three essential distinctions in God's nature. God is the Holy Trinity.	1. There is one God with no essential divisions in His nature. He is not a plurality of persons, but He does have a plurality of manifestations, roles, titles, attributes, or relationships to man. Furthermore, these are not limited to three.
2. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) are the three persons in the Godhead. They are distinct persons, and they are co-equal, co-eternal and of co-essence. However, God the Father is the head of the Trinity in some sense, and the Son and Spirit proceed from Him in some sense.	2. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) are different designations for the one God. God is the Father. God is the Holy Spirit. The Son is God manifest in flesh. The term *Son* always refers to the Incarnation, and never to deity apart from humanity.
3. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of *God the Son*. Jesus is not the Father or the Holy Spirit.	3. Jesus Christ is the *Son of God*. He is the incarnation of the fulness of God. In His deity, Jesus is the Father and the Holy Spirit.
4. The Son is eternal. God the Son has existed from all eternity. The Son is eternally begotten by the Father.	4. The Son is begotten, not eternal. The Son of God existed from all eternity only as a plan in the mind of God. The Son of God came into actual (substantial) existence at the Incarnation, at which time the Son was conceived (begotten) by the Spirit of God.
5. The *Word* of John 1 (the Logos) is the second person in the Godhead, namely God the Son.	5. The *Word* of John 1 (the Logos) is not a separate person, but is the thought, plan, activity, or expression of God. The Word was expressed in flesh as the Son of God.
6. Jesus is the human name given to God the Son as manifested in flesh.	6. Jesus (meaning Jehovah-Savior) is the revealed name of God in the New Testament. Jesus is the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
7. Water baptism is correctly administered by saying "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."	7. Water baptism is correctly administered by saying "in the name of Jesus." The name of Jesus is usually accompanied with the titles of Lord, Christ, or both.
8. We will see the Trinity or	8. We will see Jesus Christ in

the Triune God in heaven. (Many trinitarians say we will see three bodies, which is outright tritheism. Others leave open the possibility that we will see only one Spirit being with one body. Most trinitarians do not know what they believe about this, and some frankly admit they do not know.[2])	heaven. He is the One on the throne and the only God we will ever see.
9. The Godhead is a mystery. We must accept by faith the mystery of the Trinity despite its apparent contradictions.	9. The Godhead is no mystery, especially to the church. We cannot understand everything there is to know about God, but the Bible clearly teaches that God is one in number and that Jesus Christ is the one God manifest in flesh.

What Does the Average Church Member Believe?

In viewing the contrasts between trinitarianism and Oneness, we may ask what does the average person who calls himself a Christian really believe? Of course, most Christian denominations officially accept trinitarianism. However, most trinitarian scholars carefully distance themselves from tritheism and many use terminology that sounds almost like Oneness.

Many church members do not really understand the doctrine of trinitarianism and, as a practical matter, are closer to Oneness belief. Some questions which if answered in the affirmative indicate a leaning towards Oneness or a functional acceptance of it are:

- Do you usually pray directly to Jesus? When you pray to the Father, do you switch over into language indicating that actually you are thinking about Jesus (for example, using "Lord," "in your name," or "Jesus")?
- Do you expect to see only one God in heaven, namely Jesus Christ?
- Is it correct to say that you seldom or never pray directly to the Holy Spirit as a separate person?
- Is the doctrine of the trinity confusing to you or a mystery to you?

Based on answers to these questions and others like them, we feel the majority of Bible believers instinctively think in Oneness terms and not in trinitarian terms. Moreover, it appears that when a person receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit he instinctively thinks in terms of Oneness belief.

Most Catholics and Protestants do not have a well developed concept of the trinity, do not know in detail what trinitarianism teaches, and cannot explain Bible passages in trinitarian terms. Today, we find a strong emphasis on trinitarianism and extremely tritheistic forms of trinitarianism primarily in some trinitarian Pentecostal groups. The apparent reason for this is that they have faced the Oneness issue, have consciously rejected Oneness, and so have gone into radical trinitarianism.

A simple question will help the trinitarian church member clarify his own beliefs. The question is: "When we see God in heaven, what will we see?" If he answers that we will see three persons with three bodies, then he is a strong, radical trinitarian. His answer indicates a pagan tritheism, not the strong monotheism of the Bible. (See Chapter I.) If he answers that we will see one God with one body, then he is close to Oneness. Given this answer, it is easy to demonstrate from Revelation that the One we will see is actually Jesus Christ, for in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Conclusion

The Bible does not teach the doctrine of the trinity, and trinitarianism actually contradicts the Bible. It does not add any positive benefit to the Christian message. Without the man-made doctrine of the trinity we can still affirm the deity of Jesus, the humanity of Jesus, the virgin birth, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith, the sole authority of Scripture, and any other doctrine that is essential to true Christianity. In fact, we enhance these doctrines when we adhere strictly to the Bible message that Jesus is the one God manifested in flesh. Adherence to Oneness does not mean a denial that God came in flesh as the Son or a denial that God fulfills the roles of Father and Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the doctrine of the trinity does detract from the important biblical themes of the oneness of God and the absolute deity of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christianity should stop using trinitarian terminology and should go back to emphasis of the basic Bible message. Most Bible believers do not think in strong trinitarian terms, so a transition away from

it would not be very difficult, at least on an individual level.

On the other side, strict adherence to Oneness belief brings many blessings. It places emphasis where it should be—on the importance of biblical terminology, thought, and themes. It establishes Christianity as the true heir of Judaism and as a truly monotheistic belief. It reminds us that God our Father and Creator loved us so much He robed Himself in flesh to come as our Redeemer. It reminds us that we can receive this same Creator and Redeemer in our hearts through His Own Spirit.

Oneness magnifies Jesus Christ, exalts His name, recognizes who He really is, and acknowledges His full deity. Exalting Jesus and His name in preaching and in worship brings a mighty move of His power in blessings, deliverance, answered prayer, miracles, healing, and salvation. Wonderful things happen when someone preaches a message on the deity of Jesus, the name of Jesus, and the oneness of God, but rarely does one get inspired over a message on the trinity.

A strong belief in the oneness of God and the absolute deity of Jesus Christ is a crucial element in restoring the church to true biblical belief and apostolic power.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XII

[1] Brumback, p. 79.

[2] Ramm, p. 171.

13

CONCLUSION

In summary, what can we say about God? We know there is one indivisible God (Deuteronomy 6:4). God is a Spirit (John 4:24) and therefore invisible to man (John 1:18; I Timothy 6:16). He is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent (Psalm 139; Revelation 19:6). In the Old Testament, God manifested Himself many times in visible ways (Genesis 18:1; Exodus 33.22-23). These temporary, visible manifestations are called theophanies. In the New Testament, God manifested Himself in human flesh as Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 1:1, 14; I Timothy 3:16).

In the Old Testament God revealed Himself by the name Jehovah or Yahweh, which means the Self Existing One or the Eternal One.[1]

The New Testament often describes the one God as the Father. This title emphasizes His role as Creator and Father of all (Malachi 2:10), as Father of the born-again believers (Romans 8:14-16), and as Father of the only begotten Son (John 3:16).

In addition, the Bible uses the term *Holy Ghost* or *Holy Spirit* to refer to the one God. This describes what God is and emphasizes God in activity (Genesis 1:2), particularly in activity related to man such as regenerating, baptizing, filling, and anointing (Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4).

The Bible also uses the term *Word* to refer to the one God, particularly to the thought, plan, or expression of God (John 1:1, 14).

In the New Testament, God manifested Himself in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. This manifestation of God is called the Son of God (not God the Son) because He was literally conceived in the womb of a woman by the miraculous operation of the Spirit of God (Matthew 1:18-20; Luke 1:35). Thus the word *Son* never denotes deity alone, but always describes God as manifested in the flesh, in Christ (Matthew 25:31), and sometimes describes Christ's humanity alone (Romans 5:10). We do not say that the Father is the Son, but that the Father is *in* the Son. We cannot separate the Son from the Incarnation (Galatians 4:4). Therefore, the Son did not pre-exist the Incarnation except as a plan in the mind of God, namely as the Word.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God—God in flesh (Matthew 1:21-23). He has a dual nature—human and divine, or flesh and Spirit. In other words, two complete natures are united inseparably in the person of Jesus Christ. In His human nature Jesus is the son of Mary. In His divine nature Jesus is the one God Himself (II Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 2:9; I Timothy 3:16). Jesus is the Father (Isaiah 9:6; John 10:30; 14:6-11), Jehovah (Jeremiah 23:6), the Word (John 1:14), and the Holy

Spirit (II Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 3:16-17).

The Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of the oneness of God and the absolute deity of Jesus Christ. The early Christians believed this great truth, and many people have adhered to it throughout history. Although in the course of history trinitarianism became the predominant doctrine in Christendom, the Scriptures do not teach it. In fact, the Bible nowhere mentions or alludes to the word *trinity*, the phrase "three persons in one substance," or the phrase "three persons in one God." We can explain all the Scriptures in both testaments adequately without any need to resort to the doctrine of the trinity.

Trinitarianism contradicts and detracts from important biblical teachings. It detracts from the Bible's emphasis on God's absolute oneness, and it detracts from Jesus Christ's full deity. Trinitarian doctrine as it exists today did not develop fully and the majority of Christendom did not accept it fully until the fourth century after Christ.

Here are five specific ways in which the biblical doctrine of Christian monotheism differs from the presently existing doctrine of trinitarianism. 1. The Bible does not speak of an eternally existing "God the Son;" for the Son refers only to the Incarnation. 2. The phrase "three persons in one God" is inaccurate because there is no distinction of persons in God. If "persons" indicates a plurality of personalities, wills, minds, beings, or visible bodies, then it is incorrect because God is one being with one personality, will, and mind. He has one visible body—the glorified human body of Jesus Christ. 3. The term "three persons" is incorrect because there is no essential threeness about God. The only number relevant to God is one. He has many different roles, titles, manifestations, or attributes, and we cannot limit them to three. 4. Jesus is the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for Jesus is the revealed name of God in the New Testament (John 5:43; Matthew 1:21; John 14:26). Therefore, we correctly administer water baptism using the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38). 5. Jesus is the incarnation of the fulness of God. He is the incarnation of the Father (the Word, the Spirit, Jehovah) not just the incarnation of a person called "God the Son."

What is the essence of the doctrine of God as taught by the Bible—the doctrine we have labelled Oneness? First, there is one indivisible God with no distinction of persons. Second, Jesus Christ is the fulness of the Godhead incarnate. He is God the Father—the Jehovah of the Old Testament—robed in flesh. All of God is in Jesus Christ, and we find all we need in Him. The only God we will ever see in heaven is Jesus Christ.

Having said all of this, why is a correct understanding of and belief in this doctrine so important? Here are four reasons. 1. It is important because the whole Bible teaches it and emphasizes it. 2. Jesus stressed how important it is for us to understand who He really is—the Jehovah of the Old Testament: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). The word *he* is in italics in the *King James Version,* which indicates it is not in the Greek

but was added by the translators. So Jesus called Himself the "I AM," the name Jehovah used in Exodus 3:14-15. Jesus was saying, "If you believe not that I AM, you shall die in your sins." It is not mandatory that a person have a thorough comprehension of all questions relating to the Godhead to be saved, but he must believe that there is one God and that Jesus is God. 3. The Oneness message determines the formula for water baptism—in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38). 4. Oneness teaches us how important the baptism of the Holy Ghost really is. Since there is only one Spirit of God, and since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, Oneness shows us that we receive Christ into our lives when we are filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9).

Since the Bible so plainly teaches the oneness of God and the full deity of Jesus Christ, why is it obscure to many people, especially to those in Christendom? The answer is that it comes not merely through intellectual study but through divine illumination of the Scriptures. It comes through prayerful study, dilligent searching, and intense desire for truth. When Peter made his great confession of the deity of Jesus, Jesus said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:16-17). Therefore, if we want to understand the mighty God in Christ we must put away man's doctrines, traditions, philosophies, and theories. In their place we must put the pure Word of God. We must ask God to reveal this great truth to us through His Word. We must seek after His Spirit to illuminate His Word and to guide us into all truth (John 14:26;

16:13). It is not enough to rely on church dogmas, for church dogmas are only valid if they are taught in Scripture. We must go back to the Bible itself, study it, and ask God to illuminate it by His Spirit.

It is appropriate that we close this book with Colossians 2:8-10, a great passage of warning, instruction, and inspiration with regard to the precious truths of the oneness of God and the deity of Jesus Christ.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

Amen!

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GLOSSARY

Adoptionism. Technically, an eighth century doctrine originating with Spanish theologians who taught that the man Jesus was adopted into the Sonship by an act of God. In general, any belief that Jesus was a man who was elevated to divinity at some point in his life.

Agnosticism. The denial of any knowledge concerning the existence of God. Usually, the agnostic also denies the possibility of knowing whether or not God exists.

Anthropomorphism. The use of human characteristics to describe God; for example, the attribution of human emotions and human body parts to God. This is usually considered to be symbolic or figurative language to aid man in understanding the nature of God. ANTHROPOPATISM

Apollinarianism. The Christological position of Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea (died 390?). In general, he believed Christ had an incomplete human nature—specifically, that Christ had a human body and soul, but not a human spirit. Instead of a human spirit he had the divine Spirit or the Logos. The Council of Constantinople in 381 condemned Apollinarianism.

Apologist. One who defends Christianity against intellectual objections. In early church history, the Greek apologists were Christian leaders from approximately 130 to 180 A.D. who wrote treatises in Greek defending Christianity against attacks by pagan philosophers.

Arianism. The Christological views of Arius (280?-336), a priest at Alexandria. Arius held that there is only one God, and that the Son or Logos is a divine being like God but created by God. Thus, Jesus was a demigod. This view came very close to sweeping Christendom in the fourth century, but was condemned at the Council of Nicea in 325 and again at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

Atheism. The assertion or belief that there is no God.

Athanasianism. The trinitarian doctrine of Athanasius (293-373), bishop of Alexandria. The Council of Nicea in 325 gave the first official approval to this doctrine and the Council of Constantinople in 381 established it even more thoroughly. It is the orthodox view of Roman Catholics and Protestants alike. Basically, it holds that there are three eternal persons in the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. These three persons are co-equal, co-eternal, and of co-essence.

Athanasian Creed. An ancient trinitarian creed *not* formulated by Athanasius. It developed in the fifth century and probably reflects the theology of Augustine. The western part of Christendom (the Roman Catholic Church) officially adopted it and the Protestants have generally retained it, but Eastern Orthodoxy has never accepted it because it states that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son instead of the Father only. It is the most complete statement in ancient church history of the doctrine of the trinity. See Chapter XI for part of the text of this creed.

Binitarianism. The belief in two persons in the

Godhead: God the Father and God the Son. A form of this doctrine was prevalent among the Greek apologists. It also exists today.

Christology. The doctrine of Jesus Christ and the Incarnation. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 expressed what is the traditional Christian formulation on this subject when it affirmed that Jesus Christ was one person with two natures—human and divine.

Christocentric. A system of theology in which the person and work of Christ is the foundation and focus of everything is called Christocentric.

Cerinthianism. A first century Gnostic doctrine named after an early proponent, Cerinthus, who held that Jesus and Christ were separate beings. According to this view, Jesus was a human born naturally (not of a virgin), while Christ was a spirit that came upon Jesus at his baptism and left before his crucifixion.

Ditheism. The belief in two separate and distinct gods.

Docetism. A first century Gnostic belief that Christ was a spirit being only. According to this view, Christ appeared to have a real human body but actually did not.

Dynamic Monarchianism. See Monarchianism.

Ebionitism. A first century heresy originating with Jewish Christians. The Ebionites rejected the teachings of Paul and emphasized the importance of the law of Moses. Generally, they regarded Jesus as a divinely inspired prophet but not as God.

Gnosticism. A term covering a wide range of religious thought in the first few centuries after Christ.

It originated in paganism, but adopted many Christian elements, and became a major threat to Christianity. In general, Gnosticism held that spirit is good, matter is evil, salvation consists in deliverance of the spirit from matter, and salvation is achieved by means of a secret or higher knowledge (Greek, *gnosis*). Gnosticism as applied to the Godhead and to Christology held the following: The Supreme God was transcendent and unapproachable, but from Him came a series of progressively more inferior emanations (called aeons). The lowest of these aeons was Jehovah. Christ is one of the highest aeons. Since all matter is evil, Christ was a spirit being only and had only an apparent body (the doctrine of Docetism). Or, some taught that Christ was a spirit being temporarily associated a man Jesus who died (the doctrine of Cerinthianism). These Gnostic views on the Godhead were opposed by John in his writings and by Paul in Colossians.

Godhead. Synonym of the word *deity.* Refers to the state of being God, and to the sum total of God's nature.

Greek apologists. See Apologist.

Homoiousios. Greek word translated as "like in nature" or "similar in nature." The Arians used it to describe the relation of Jesus to God. Many of those who advocated its use at the Council of Nicea apparently were not Arians, but opposed the Sabellian connotations of the alternate word, homoousios. Nicea rejected Arianism and the use of homoiousios.

Homoousios. Greek word translated as "same in nature." Athanasius advocated its use and the Council of Nicea adopted this word to describe the relationship doctrine in the seventh century which held that Christ had only one will. The majority view in Christianity is that Christ had two cooperating wills—human and divine—but the monotheletes believed Christ had one divine-human will.

Nature. "The inherent character or basic constitution of a person or a thing" *(Webster's Dictionary).* This book uses the word to describe the humanity and divinity of Christ. We express this by saying Christ had a dual nature or by saying Christ had two natures. Christ had a complete human nature (see Chapter V) and also the complete divine nature (see Chapter IV). Both humanity and deity are essential components of Jesus Christ's being.

Nestorianism. The Christology of Nestorius (Patriarch of Constantinople, 428-431). Nestorius held that Christ had two complete natures—human and divine. He taught that one could not call Mary the "Mother of God" because she was the mother of the human nature only. The Council of Ephesus in 431 condemned Nestorius for dividing Christ into two persons, but Nestorius denied the charge. Possibly, he taught that the two natures of Christ were united morally or in purpose only rather than essentially or physically. However, many historians conclude that Nestorius actually taught two natures in one person, but became the victim of misunderstanding and opposition because he emphasized the distinctions between the two natures and refused to call Mary the mother of God.

Nicene Creed. The product of the Council of Nicea in 325. The present version includes additions made at

the Council of Constantinople in 381 and in the fifth century. The original creed condemned Arianism by stating that the Son was of the same nature (homoousios) as the Father. It also stated that the Son was eternal and implied the eternal existence of Father and Son as distinct persons in the Godhead. The Council of Constantinople added phrases establishing that the Holy Ghost also was an eternally distinct person in the Godhead. Thus, the Nicene Creed is important for three reasons: it rejected Arianism, it was the first official pronouncement to express a trinitarian view of God, and it was the first official pronouncement to reject (albeit by implication) modalism.

Omnipotence. An attribute that God alone possesses, and meaning that He has all power.

Omnipresence. An attribute that God alone possesses, and meaning He is present everywhere at the same time. Note that this is more than just the ability to appear anywhere at any time or the ability to be many places at one time.

Omniscience. An atrribute that God alone possesses, and meaning He has all knowledge of all things, including foreknowledge.

Oneness. In reference to God, oneness means the state of being absolutely and indivisibly one, or one in numerical value. Also, there can be oneness between God and man and between man and man in the sense of unity of mind, will, and purpose. This book uses the term Oneness (capitalized) to mean the doctrine that God is absolutely one in numerical value, that Jesus is the one God, and that God is not a plurality of persons. Thus Oneness is a modern term basically equivalent to modalism or modalistic monarchianism.

Ousia. Greek word meaning substance, nature, or being. Translated as "substance" in the trinitarian formula "three persons in one substance."

Patripassianism. Name given to modalism, modalistic monarchianism, or Sabellianism. It came from Latin words meaning "the Father suffered." Some historians use it to describe modalism because Tertullian accused the modalists of believing that the Father suffered and died. However, the modalists apparently denied Tertullian's accusation. The word therefore represents a misinterpretation of modalism by trinitarians, for modalism did not teach that the Father is the Son, but that the Father is in the Son. The flesh was not the Father, but the Father was in the flesh. Thus, modalism did not teach that the Father physically suffered or died.

Pantheism. A belief that equates God with nature or the substance and forces of the universe. Thus, it denies the existence of a rational, intelligent God. Rather, it asserts that God is everything and everything is God.

Person. The primary meaning of the word is an individual human being, or the individual personality of a human being. In Christology, the term describes the union of the two natures of Christ; namely, there are two natures in the person of Christ. Trinitarians use the term to represent three eternal distinctions of essence in God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost). Thus, we have the trinitarian formula, "three persons in one substance" or "one God in three persons." Although trinitarians usually state that God does not have three separate personalities or minds, the word *person* does carry strong connotations of individuality of personality, mind, and will. For a discussion of the Greek and Latin words translated as "person," see *Hypostasis* and *Persona* respectively.

Persona. (Plural: *personae.*) Latin word translated as "person." Tertullian used this word in his trinitarian formula, "una substantia et tres personae" ("three persons in one substance"). Early Latin usage did not restrict the word to its modern meaing of a self-conscious being. At that time, it could mean a mask worn by an actor, a role in a drama, or a legal party to a contract. However, it apparently could also apply to individual persons. It did carry connotations of individualized personality that the Greek word *hypostasis* did not have originally. (See Chapter XI.) Although the Nicene Creed used *hypostasis,* which was later translated as "persona," Tertullian had already used *persona* much earlier to describe the members of the trinity.

Polytheism. The belief in more than one god, from Greek words meaning "many gods." Ditheism and tritheism are forms of polytheism. The Bible strongly rejects polytheism. Most ancient religions were polytheistic, including those of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Canaan, Greece, and Rome.

Post-apostolic fathers. Leaders of the Christian church in the days after the twelve apostles. In this book, the term specifically refers to the leaders from approximately 90 to 140 A.D., the most prominent of whom were Polycarp, Hermas, Clement of Rome, and Ignatius.

Sabellianism. Another term for modalism or modalistic monarchianism. It is derived from Sabellius, the most prominent exponent of the doctrine in ancient church history. Sabellius preached in Rome around 215 A.D. The doctrine is basically equivalent to modern Oneness.

Subordinationism. Belief that one person in the Godhead is subordinate to or was created by another person in the Godhead. Of course, this presupposes a belief in a plurality of persons in the Godhead. In early trinitarianism, it surfaced as the belief that the Logos is the divine Son and is subordinate to the Father. This was the view of some Greek apologists, Tertullian, and Origen. Arianism is an extreme development of this doctrine. Also, the term applies to any belief that the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Father or the Son. Orthodox trinitarianism as expressed by the Nicene and Athanasian creeds theoretically rejects any form of subordinationsism, but the tendency towards it remains. (See Chapter XI.)

Substantia. Latin word meaning substance, and used by Tertullian in his trinitarian formula, "Three persons in one substance."

Theophany. A visible manifestation of God, usually thought of as temporary in nature. The Old Testament appearances of God in human or angelic form were theophanies. Jesus Christ is more than a theophany; for He is not merely God appearing in human form but God actually robing Himself in a real human person (body, soul, and spirit).

Trinitarianism. The belief that there are three persons in the one God. History credits Tertullian (died 225?) with being the father of Christian trinitarianism, for he was the first person to use the Latin word *trinitas* (trinity) for God. He was also the first to use the formula, "una substantia et tres personae" ("three persons in one substance"). Modern trinitarianism asserts that there are three persons in the one God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost—and that these three persons are co-equal, co-eternal, and of co-essence. Thus, trinitarianism teaches three eternal distinctions in God's nature but denies there are three separate gods. The Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. marked the first official acceptance of trinitarianism by Christianity. The Council of Constantinople in 381 reaffirmed and further clarified the doctrine. The most complete statement of trinitarianism in ancient church history is the Athanasian Creed, which dates from the fifth century.

Trinity. The Godhead in trinitarian belief; namely, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Tritheism. Belief in three gods. As such, it is a form of polytheism. Advocates of trinitarianism deny that they are tritheists; however, trinitarianism certainly has tritheistic tendencies and some extreme forms of trinitarianism are tritheistic. (See Chapter XI.) For example, any belief that there are three self-conscious minds in the Godhead or three eternal bodies in the Godhead can properly be called tritheism.

Unitarianism. In general, the belief in only one person in the Godhead. In particular, this term usually describes a movement that emphasizes the unity of the Godhead but does so by denying the deity of Jesus Christ. It arose as an antitrinitarian movement in Protestantism, and organized as a denomination now called the Unitarian-Universalist Association. In addition to denying the deity of Jesus Christ, Unitarianism denies a number of other evangelical or fundamental beliefs including the virgin birth of Jesus and the substitutionary atonement. It can be misleading to identify Unitarianism with Oneness for two reasons. First, Oneness does not say God is one "person," but rather there is one God. Second, Oneness believers affirm the full deity of Jesus, His virgin birth, and the substitutionary atonement, unlike the modern Unitarian-Universalist denomination.